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## **Acknowledgements**

With thanks to those pivotal characters – the children and professionals – who took part, and also to my supervisors and the examiners who helped me to tell this story.

For, my mother, my father, my sister and my beloved husband – may we all live happily ever after.

**The impact of national  
approaches to early years  
education on the cultivation of  
creativity in young children - a  
tale of two systems.**

**by**

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requirements for the degree of  
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## Abstract.



Prompted by the prevalence of discourses surrounding the need to cultivate creativity for the benefit of wider society and for children themselves, this study aims to explore how creativity is fostered in young children aged 3 to 4. The study recognises that the cultivation of creativity in young children is indivisible from the social ecology in which they are located: it is subject to a network of influences, from the cultural to the local. By inquiring into these influences, it creates an account of how they interact to shape a national approach to early years education and the fostering of children's creativity within it.

Using the concept of story as a model, this study has adopted a narrative-style methodological approach in order to look at the phenomenon in a holistic manner. For this purpose, the approach combined documentary analysis with interviews, reflective stories, observations, walking tours and map-making with children and early years practitioners. Beyond this, it compares the educational system of England with Catalonia in order to look beyond more popularly researched national systems of early years education and to use the comparison as a lens to help identify the dominant influences on the cultivation of creativity of children in a national approach to early years education. The study particularly highlights the effects of history, cultural values, policy and practice on the fostering of individual children's creativity in early years settings, extending understanding of this process beyond the confines of classroom and curriculum. **Word count: 94,992**

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## Introduction.



From the very beginning, it should be made clear that this study is about stories; individual stories and the wider narratives of the societies in which those individuals live. In keeping with this focus, it must be acknowledged that the catalyst for the project is also part of a story – my own. Though there are significant academic reasons to investigate this area, which will be addressed shortly, understanding creativity in early years education as a research aim has been the culmination of long-standing personal and professional interests. From a shy childhood that was illuminated by those moments where I was given the opportunity to express my creativity, during school-sanctioned activities or disappearing into a paracosm or imaginary world of my own, creativity allowed me to transcend my self-imposed limits, participate in group activities I could not otherwise manage and begin to shine. I grew to love the creative arts, and have tried to keep up some practice of them throughout my adult life. I began working with young children in my late teens and soon noticed their preference towards activities where their creativity was allowed to flourish; open-ended activities over extended periods of time as opposed to shorter adult-led or controlled ones. Later on, I was able to apply this knowledge whilst teaching English to young children in Spain, improving their



behaviour and focus in class. Though I felt by instinct that these activities were somehow better for the children, it was not until I began my first degree that I began to find out that the delight and engagement I had witnessed in these scenarios had much more profound implications than I had understood. From this point on, creativity became the focus of my studies and research.

Having given a brief summary of the story of this project's roots, this chapter will go on to untangle the threads in current discourse that have provided the academic rationale for this project. There is a wealth of information for the curious student regarding the benefits of creativity for children and people in general and how best to cultivate it; so what did I hope to discover with this study? During the initial research phase for this study around the concept of creativity I happened upon the following quote, which had the dual effect of both clarifying the key aims for the project and providing a certain level of amusement:

*'Creativity is like murder – both depend on motive, means and opportunity.'*

**(Johnson-Laird, 1988: 208)**

Irony aside, this really encapsulates the impetus of this research project: to understand what it is that makes creativity happen. If creativity is a concept whose realization is dependent on a web of factors, I hoped, in undertaking this project, to unfold the story as Agatha Christie or her detective protagonists might. This project would endeavour to explore how all the different elements come together in order for the creative act to take place.

That creativity is essential for both intellectual and emotional development has been recognised by such historically significant theorists of the mind as Bruner (1962) and Winnicott (1971) and continues to influence much contemporary thinking in education (Robinson, 2001; Craft, 2008). Yet in recent years, creativity has begun to be recognised as having much wider benefits and applications. A report by the think tank Demos (Tims, 2010) highlighted that nurturing children's creativity in the early years of education is essential for future economic growth, a notion which may have a particular resonance for economies struggling to recover from the economic crisis of 2007/08. Such a perspective would appear to be upheld by those at the helm of global industry, particularly in the technology sector. Steve Jobs, the late co-founder of Apple, once remarked that creativity was a rare commodity and that too many people are only coming up with linear solutions to problems (Wolf, 1996), while Bill Gates (2005), founder of Microsoft, has expressed the view that creativity and intelligence are the means by which we can improve the lives we lead and the world we live in. Nor is this view

confined to the West: similar sentiments are expressed by companies such as Samsung, describing creativity as 'the seed of innovation' (Oh-Hyun, 2013). This growth of interest in the cultivation of creativity has dovetailed with my own particular interests in both creativity and the early years, leading me to consider that if creativity is so beneficial at both an individual and a societal level, yet is apparently insufficiently present for our present and future needs, what is impacting upon its cultivation?

It is recognised that children's experiences of education impact upon their cognitive abilities (e.g. Wood, 1998); therefore it would be logical to look at the earlier stages of this process. Creativity and its role in early years education has been explored by several well-known researchers in this country. Possibly the most recognisable of these might be Anna Craft (2008), Bernadette Duffy (2006) and Tina Bruce (2011), though these names represent just a fraction of a thriving area of research. Much of this work, however, is aimed at practitioners in early years settings and so is focused mostly on strategies they can use for cultivating creativity in the children they care for as opposed to understanding the phenomenon more generally. Yet it is also recognised that the cultivation of creativity goes beyond the classroom: at this end of the scale we find Csikszentmihalyi (1999), who refuted the idea that creativity is a purely mental process, but is also a cultural and social event; it is part of an extensive system. Some researchers, such as Craft (2008) and Gardner (2006), tie these ends - the cultural and the individual - together by extending the appreciation of the role of culture in creativity to the learning process, examining how cultural mores manifest themselves in an education system. Gardner (2006) in particular has drawn an interesting comparison between China and the United States in this respect, remarking upon how certain cultural ideas inform teaching styles and curriculum content. There does not yet, however, appear to be a comprehensive study of how a national narrative shapes its educational approach and, by extension, the cultivation of creativity in its young children.

As a result of the research outlined above, this study recognises that an educational approach is about so much more than curriculum and teachers. Gardner's (2006) views are not without precedent: Dewey (1897) stated that '...education proceeds by the participation of the individual in the social consciousness of the race'. So any study that is interested in how an educational system can foster creativity in its young children must therefore also examine the disposition of the society around it. As a result, this project has been designed to try to take a holistic, ecological view of the fostering of creativity in early years settings. It endeavours to unpick the over-arching narrative by looking at the roles of the setting, the back-story and the

main players in order to get a sense of the full story. This process has been assisted by the use of a comparison between two systems, England and Catalonia, an approach which some researchers suggest can be helpful in identifying particular or persistent issues (e.g. King, 1962). The majority of international research in early years education has thus far focused on an inspirational few, such as the approaches used in Scandinavia, Reggio Emilia in Italy and Te Whariki in New Zealand. While Catalonia may not offer such a striking and innovative system as these, there are significant differences between the provision of early years education in England and Catalonia to provoke a comparison and help in the process of establishing how the educational narrative in a country impacts upon the cultivation of creativity in its young children.

The structure of this thesis will be as follows. Chapter 1 will provide an overview of the two nations, England and Catalonia, including some of their historical and cultural touchstones in order to provide a sense of place for the study alongside some general understanding that will provide a foundation for the analysis of creativity within each system that will occur in later chapters. Chapter 2 provides an examination of the existing research that has informed this study; it has three main strands, looking at the place of creativity in current discourse at a general level, establishing what creativity is, and finally asking why creativity matters in early years education today. Chapter 3 is concerned with the methodology of the project, discussing why it has chosen to undertake a comparison and why it has taken a narrative approach, laying out the methods used and the considerations and limitations of its design. Chapter 4 sets out the findings of these methods from both countries and discusses their significance in terms of the cultivation of creativity. Finally, Chapter 5 provides a conclusion to the study and discusses what understandings might be taken away from this project.

Creativity today might be viewed as somewhat of a buzzword, central not only to our educational curriculums (e.g. Department for Education (DfE), 2012a), but appearing in other ambits of society too. Industry leaders like Jobs and Gates might recognise the importance of creativity for technical innovation and quality of life, but it has been picked up on by all kinds of organisations as a means of making something sound more interesting, modern or zeitgeisty. 'Creative Cooks' is a website by the premium food company Epicure that essentially tells you how to cook with their products; 'Creative Personal Development' is another website, this time proposing to improve your life; the GREAT Festival of Creativity is a showcase of the different British business sectors run by UK Trade and Investment. Yet most of these are concerned with the idea of creativity as a product; a product with magical effects that

everyone appears to want. Such a perspective seems to ignore the individual benefits to children's happiness and engagement that are prized by educators such as myself, though perhaps these views are not so polarised. As Dewey (1897) recognised, children live within society and society needs children to continue. If engagement and delight facilitated by creative freedom makes children better learners, perhaps this will in turn make them better 'producers' within the economy as they grow. This would certainly seem to be the intention of Elizabeth Truss (2014), Education and Childcare Minister: to harness creativity to surpass our rivals. Indeed, Jens Qvortrup (1997) argues that we should think of children's learning as contributing to the economy in this way as this recognises that they are part of society rather than merely its dependents. The current interest in creativity might be viewed as an opportunity for children and their educators, a chance to have their dispositions and freedoms valued.

What is clear is that creativity is a fantastically complex phenomenon that is simultaneously dependent on and beneficial to the individual and the society in which that individual lives. If it is recognised that there is a need to cultivate it, for the good of the individual and for society, it is necessary to understand what impacts upon that cultivation from both ends of that scale. Perhaps such an understanding can better equip us for the task of improving our strategies in early years education in order to better facilitate the cultivation of creativity in young children from an early age, not through the discovery of new techniques, but by understanding how the system operates in order to implement our techniques more effectively. It is hoped that by laying bare the elements of the narrative around early years education and creativity in these two countries an understanding can be developed of how these stories have unfolded and how they might end. This process will begin in the following chapter by grounding the project in a brief study of the cultural backgrounds of the two countries.

This chapter ends with a small caveat: the final stages of the write up for this thesis have taken place against an interesting backdrop in terms of early years policy and national politics. Amendments have been made to the Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage (DfE, 2012a), a new version of which has been issued in September 2014, though the amendments do not impact on the teaching and learning requirements. These remain the same as the 2012 version, which is the one this study consulted. Politically, Catalonia has been pursuing the cause of independence, which should it succeed will have quite an impact on their educational policy, the statutory requirements of which currently originate from Madrid (Jefatura del Estado, 2006). This study has endeavoured to keep abreast of all changes within

both national approaches; all information within this document was true at the time of writing, though it remains to be seen how long things will remain the same.

## Chapter 1 – A Prologue.



This research project has been set in two countries, England and Catalonia, in the hope that comparing two approaches to early years education will highlight significant factors in the cultivation of creativity in young children. Following Dewey's (1897) interpretation of education as the inheritance of, and participation in, society and its consciousness, this project views the educational approach of each country as necessarily enmeshed in its culture. This means that to understand the educational approach, it has also been necessary to understand the culture which has birthed it, which is the aim of this chapter. While I have been fortunate enough to live in both of these countries, which has given me a superficial acquaintance with the culture of each setting, it has been important to look at this area in greater detail in order to gain a deeper perspective on how certain issues such as history and politics and even geography have come together to shape the approaches to early years education used in each country today. Much of the particular detail connected to early years education and creativity has been addressed by the research methods, the results of which are examined in the main body of this thesis. However, some general background is helpful in beginning this project, and this chapter attempts to provide an overview of these two distinctive nations, to prepare for

the deeper investigations into their educational systems which follow. This chapter may then be read as a prologue to the study.

Foremost is the question of why these particular countries were chosen. Once again I must acknowledge the influence of my own story as this choice was partially convenience: as indicated in the opening paragraph, I have some experience in both countries. But why *particularly* focus on England and Catalonia? Why not talk about Spain and the United Kingdom (UK) as wholes? They remain so, at least for the moment, post one referendum and perhaps pending another. Spain and the UK could be considered composite countries, containing nations within nations, though the central governments of each offer different degrees of recognition of this status. Curriculum content in Spain is generally devolved to the 17 autonomous communities within it; the Catalan statute of autonomy states that the government of Catalonia has the exclusive right to determine the content of its early childhood curriculum (Generalitat de Catalunya, 2006).

The four countries that make up the UK also have separate curriculums, having been granted the right to legislate in the devolution Acts of 1998 (Cabinet Office, Scotland Office, Northern Ireland Office and Wales Office, 2013). Looking at twenty-one different approaches to early years education would have been unmanageable within the scope of this particular project, so just one example was chosen from each country. For convenience, it seemed logical to choose the two territories in which I had the most experience and a grasp of the language, as cultural and language barriers can commonly inhibit interpretation of the data in international studies (Hartas, 2010). I am not Catalan, I am English, and I recognise that I will never speak, understand or think like a native, but I hope to use a combination of the experiences I do have and the connections I retain with Catalonia to help navigate through the cultural differences.

That being said, there are a surprising number of cultural similarities between these two European nations. In spite of England's separation from the Catholic Church, both countries have the same patron saint: Saint George or Sant Jordi, long a favourite of soldiers (Foley & McCloskey, 2013) which perhaps says something about the character of both nations. These are characters that have been shaped in remarkably similar ways. The geography of both - the island nature of England, the long coast of Catalonia - have meant that the sea has played a large part in this, both in looking outwards for adventure and profit, but receiving to their shores wave after wave of conquerors and immigrants (Eaude, 2007; Chesterton, 1917). In fact, both nations are quite proud of the distinct heritage they have developed as a result of these invasions. Catalonia describes itself as a *terra de pas*, a land that has often been passed

through with traces of its visitors left upon it (Eaude, 2007) and there is a strong tradition in Catalan thought and culture that the country has a particular philosophy it has managed to forge from its geography and its history, placed between northern, European thinking and southern, Arabic perspectives (Pujols, 2012). England's history is full of stories, true and less true, of the people who arrived on our shores, from Joseph of Arimathea to the Normans, and the contributions to the culture they brought with them: governance, infrastructure, religion, language (Chesterton, 1917).

Both countries did their fair share of invading too: their affiliation with the sea sent their inhabitants outward bound, building (and losing) empires on centuries of maritime trade. Chesterton (1917) suggested that the Briton is torn between a love of home and a love of something else, personified in the rhyme 'over the hills and far away'. This wanderlust, or perhaps greed, drove English merchants, soldiers and nobles all around the globe, creating an empire that is said to have begun with Cabot's discovery of New Found Land in 1497 and officially ended in the 1960s, though leaving a persistent legacy in many countries (Marshall, 1996). Until the end of the Middle Ages, Catalonia shared this appetite for conquest, taking territory around most of the coastal areas of the whole Mediterranean, yet as these were lost and the Catalan nation was subsumed by the Castilian crown, Spain kept a check on Catalonia's colonial urges, restricting its access to the Americas for some time (Eaude, 2007). Catalonia and England left imprints upon the lands they took – Catalan is still spoken in Sardinia and English is almost universal (Costa Carreras & Yates, 2009; Marshall, 1996) – yet both countries brought back cultural traces with them too, contributing further to each country's narrative: without which there would be no tea drinking in English homes nor hot chocolate with churros in Catalan cafes. It is recognised that the maritime trade of both England and the Iberian Peninsula enabled them to assume the power previously held by Florence and Venice as centres of information exchange, trade and manufacture after the Renaissance (Csikszentmihalyi, 1999). The openness of these two countries to other cultural influences has long been a vital tool in their development.

Politically, where England - specifically London - might be the centre of the United Kingdom, Catalonia was subsumed into the Castilian patchwork of Spain, from which it has repeatedly tried to secede (Phillips & Rahn Phillips, 2010). Indeed, in recent months, Catalonia hoped to follow the example of Scotland in holding its own referendum in this respect and though the latest news indicates that this project must be shelved as Madrid will not accept it, the issue



remains unresolved (Kassam, Tuesday 14 October 2014). For England, the reverse has been true with concerns over the last year that Scotland might wish to dissolve its ties with England.

Yet in spite of their different ideological positions towards their larger states, both countries are the largest economic contributors to the aggregated GDP of their respective sovereignties (British Chambers of Commerce, 2014; datasmicro.com, 2013). These are both countries with established, varied and comparatively healthy economies, though they may be smaller than many of their European counterparts, perhaps their relative success gives them a certain confidence that others may lack. Similarly, unlike their near neighbour France, and indeed Spain itself, both England and Catalonia have long traditions of mistrust of absolutist rule and developed similar systems of governance in the 13<sup>th</sup> century, limiting the powers of the kings to rule by agreement as opposed to absolute monarchy (Eaude, 2007; Chesterton, 1917). There is something assertive about this, a suggestion of people who have confidence in themselves, where the citizen as an individual has a central role in the running of their nation.

How do these countries view themselves? England, as part of Great Britain is going through a minor crisis in this area currently. Somewhere in the noise generated by anti-immigration rhetoric and British citizens running away to fight for a borderless militant group, it has been suggested that British values must be taught in schools (Adams, Friday 8<sup>th</sup> August 2014). Though a significant question on the lips of commentators in the media has been what is so particularly British about democracy and liberty (Adams, Friday 8<sup>th</sup> August 2014)? By contrast, Catalonia has a strong sense of national identity, wrapped up in its culture and expressed through the use of its language (Eaude, 2007). This pride and identity is not necessarily associated with racial identity as they self-identify as tolerant and welcoming, and indeed recognise their history as a *terra de pas*; though migrant workers in recent years may not necessarily agree with this in view of the exploitation they are likely to suffer (Eaude, 2007) – a position I recognise many of my old neighbours experienced. It is interesting that the one country should be so tortured about its identity and the other so clear, yet as Eaude (2007) points out, Catalan identity is bound up with Catalan nationalism, its distinction from the rest of Spain. England, with its economic and political power, has perhaps not needed to assert its character in this way. A great deal can be learned about a country's actions from their national identity and values, which will be explored in greater detail later in the study.

In terms of culture, both countries have offered great contributions to the global scene: England may have more famous faces to its name, but this could be an effect of sheer population size advantage or the aforementioned universality of the English language

(Marshall, 1996) making the culture more accessible. Yet Catalonia has brought us Picasso, Dalí, Miró and in Barcelona, breathtaking examples of creative architecture, including the dreamlike visions of Gaudí that are admired by visitors from all over the world (Eaude, 2007). It is true, however, that the time of these particular icons is gone, and perhaps many people today outside Catalonia would be hard pushed to name a modern Catalan with quite the same stature, even though walking through the streets of Catalonia the creative spirit seems alive and well in the displays, galleries, performances and festivals that are part of the fabric of everyday life. It has been argued that the Catalans have tended to over-promote their cultural icons as 'great Catalans' rather than simply 'great artists' (Eaude, 2007), it is possible that such a responsibility might be a little stifling. This patriotic tendency is one that England has largely avoided, though conceivably figures such as Turner and the Britpop phenomenon may have been used in this way. Yet in spite of his association with the 'fair hills' of England, Turner was known for paintings of landscapes all over Europe; Ruskin (1843-1870) called him a painter of countries though failed to specify which. As with philosophy, Catalan culture would appear to be intimately connected to the state of being Catalan, where the burden of being English is worn a little more lightly.

This chapter has been a very brief overview of the two countries and their cultural backgrounds. There are surprising similarities and wide differences between the two, at different points in history they have forged quite separate paths, yet at others they have left traces upon each other's histories. England has been fortunate in the moderateness of its political leaders; Catalonia has swung from far left to right and back repeatedly. The legendary knight of Catalan literature – Tirant lo Blanc – crosses paths with King Arthur, the International Brigades attracted prominent Englishmen such as George Orwell to fight for Catalonia (Eaude, 2007). Having set the scene a little, this chapter hopes to have laid the foundations for the closer analysis of these cultures in regard to their approaches to early years education and the cultivation of creativity within these systems. Before that can happen, however it is necessary to explore the most fundamental concept to this study: the nature of creativity and its role in current discourse and the development of young children.

## Chapter 2 – Literature: Leading the Way.



The preceding chapter looked at the role of the setting in framing a story, this chapter aims to offer a means to negotiate that setting: perhaps it is best described as the back-story. It is understood that a literature review allows the researcher to locate the investigation within the history and discourse of its field (Hammond & Wellington, 2012) as it shows the path that the key concepts have taken; evolving and adapting over time until they reach the point at which the investigation begins. The chapter will be taking the conceptual approach outlined by Hammond & Wellington (2012), in that as opposed to focusing mainly on previous empirical studies (which are limited) it will be largely exploring the thinking within these areas, looking for cultural or philosophical elements which may impact on the fostering of creativity in young children. Owing to the wealth of references to creativity that may be found across all kinds of disciplines it has not been possible to address all of them in this chapter. It is hoped, however, that a reasonably broad and balanced sample has been included, enough to provide a rounded picture of the context of this particular story.

Taking that conceptual approach means first identifying the key concepts that this chapter is seeking to address:

- the context of creativity in current discourse
- the nature of creativity itself
- the relationship of creativity to early years education.

The following diagram provides an idea of the type of material that was selected:

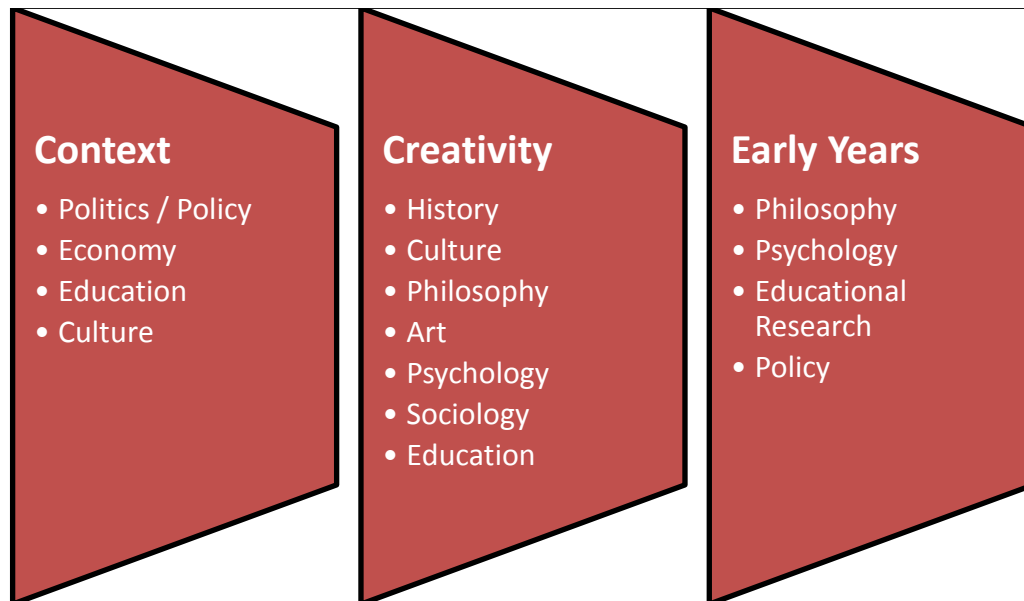


Figure 1 - Content criteria.

These criteria were chosen as being most relevant to the aims of this study. Firstly, it seemed important to justify why creativity was chosen as an area of study. This chapter will argue that this is a consequence of its prevalence in much global contemporary conversation, not only in my own field of education, but in those areas that feed into it such as politics/policy, the economy and culture. Next, drawing a parallel with Dewey's (1897) model of education in society, it seemed important to establish how creativity is perceived in order to understand why it occupies the place it does in current consciousness. Exploring this particular concept would draw on the widest range of material, the criteria being areas that are commonly associated with aspects of society and creativity itself. Lastly, returning to the focus of this study, the criteria for the literature needed narrowing to those areas that explicitly connected creativity and early years education. Had my background been different and the focus of this study been less concerned with culture and society, it would have been interesting to explore more deeply the role of creativity in areas that are less traditionally associated with the concept, such as STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering & Mathematics), particularly since so many contemporary creativity researchers highlight its role within them (e.g. Robinson, 2001;

Craft, 2008). That being said, it is hoped that the criteria used have been sufficient to address the current mood, understandings and relation to early years education of creativity in both countries.

The three concepts outlined in the diagram form the structure of this chapter, dividing it into subsections. The first of these, concerning the place of creativity in contemporary discourse, starts by looking at material such as policy and industry documents from around the world. As this section goes on to consider Gardner's (2006) understanding that a nation's approach to creativity is intimately connected to its culture, it then focuses specifically on documents that have emerged from the countries involved in this study, using examples from further afield and theory around creativity and education to explore emerging themes. The second part of this chapter, which attempts to unpick what is meant by the term 'creativity', seeks to explore this area by looking at the path taken by developing concepts of creativity and its role in human endeavour throughout history. This approach takes in perspectives ranging from the relevance of creativity to Neolithic peoples up to its manifestations in modern discourse. This section endeavours to represent the breadth of the aspects of human culture and understanding in which creativity might manifest, looking at a range of sources from different disciplines including art, philosophy and psychology, though keeping the focus on western culture, which will have the greatest relevance for the countries in this study (see Gardner, 2006). In the final part of this literature review, more specialized and contemporary literature will be examined to explore the part of early years education in the cultivation of creativity in young children. Such material will examine both why creativity might be considered important and how it might manifest in practice.

### **Context: creativity in the current climate.**

Every story needs a catalyst, something which has precipitated the action. In the case of this project, this catalyst has been a growing interest in creativity in an increasing number of fields. Over recent years, creativity has been emerging as a central feature in political and economic discourse across the globe: current U.S. policy includes: *Copyright Policy, Creativity, and Innovation in the Digital Economy (Green Paper)* (The Department of Commerce Internet Policy Task Force, 2013) and giant corporations like Samsung say '...creativity and innovation are engines for growth' (Oh-Hyun, 2013). This particularly marketised view of creativity appears to have developed for two connected reasons. Primarily, most reports or policies championing such a view highlight the fact that rapid technological growth has led to dramatic changes in

many societies, which have become increasingly globalized, leading to changes in how their economies are run (NACCCE, 1999; European Commission, 2010).

These changes particularly include a shift away from traditional industries, such as manufacturing, towards services and ideas-based economies, though references are also made to environmental concerns (NACCCE, 1999; European Commission, 2010). The economic discourse found in these types of document suggests that creativity is essential in finding ways to best adapt to continuing change (National Advisory Committee for Creative and Cultural Education (NACCCE), 1999; European Commission, 2010). Secondly, the financial crisis of 2007/8, which arguably the world is still feeling the effects of, put these changes into sharper relief, with some commentators pointing out that it has been the creative sector that has shown itself to have survived best and that those countries that have best adapted to the so-called 'creative age' are those that have survived best (Florida, 2014). So creativity is held to be a tool, both to cope with the vagaries of the current climate (economic or environmental), but also as a means of future-proofing ourselves against disaster, predicted or otherwise.

So the status of creativity has grown to the extent that in some ways it has almost come to be viewed as a panacea, a miracle cure or tonic for ailing or ageing systems. Looking particularly at the two countries featured in this inquiry, this discourse is reflected in their own policies and statements. The British Government recognises that 'the creative industries account for around £1 in every £10 of the UK's exports and are crucial to building a stronger economy,' (HM Government, 2013a). Similarly, the Spanish government has singled out its creative fashion industry as a means to boost the economy through the manufacturing and sales of high-end products and by attracting tourism (Gobierno de España, 2013). In spite of this, it is not clear that both countries may be said to have assimilated this discourse to the same extent. The Global Creativity Index was first developed in 2004 as a means to assess potential for sustainable growth, taking into account three economic, cultural and social factors: Technology, Talent and Tolerance: known as the 3Ts (Florida et al., 2011). According to this measure, Spain lags several places behind the UK in total score; behind in Technology and greatly so in Talent, though interestingly better than the UK in Tolerance (Florida et al., 2011). The economic discourse of the importance of creativity is also to be found in educational research and from both countries, along with recognition that, as highlighted by the GCI, there is a need for improvement.

Reports such as 'All our Futures' (NACCCE, 1999) and 'Born Creative' (Tims, 2010) from the UK also use the economic discourse as part of an argument for promoting creativity, especially in

children. This, however, is balanced by the acknowledgement of its other benefits, particularly to the children themselves in terms of deeper learning, better engagement and self-fulfilment (NACCCE, 1999; Tims, 2010). These reports frequently criticise the ability of existing education systems to cultivate children's creativity and propose various methods and approaches to try to enhance this from an early age. While such comprehensive reports do not seem to have a parallel in Spain, however, there is research and literature on the subject that recognises both the importance of creativity and the importance of education in cultivating it (e.g. Rodrigo Martín & Rodrigo Martín, 2012). Politically and educationally, both countries value creativity as a necessity, though the research undertaken by this investigation suggests there does appear to be a greater wealth of documentation on the subject from the UK.

This perception of creativity as a magic bullet is not without foundation. Globally, UNESCO's Global Alliance for Cultural Diversity has been investigating the so-called 'creative economy', which comprises of 'creative and cultural resources and activities' and may be applied to industries varying from science and technology through to the arts (UNESCO, 2013). As a result, they have identified that this sector has been developing strongly over recent years and has contributed greatly to growth, indeed transforming sectors of the economy through creating jobs, generating income and encouraging export (UNESCO, 2013). This has been of particular note in developing countries: creative-industry clusters initiated in 2007 in Montevideo, Uruguay, to name one example, are now said to provide 7% of all jobs in the city (UNESCO, 2013). The experiences of more established corporations would seem to reflect this: in the United States of America, the results of a 2010 survey by IBM of over 1,700 Chief Executive Officers worldwide found that this group of people overwhelmingly believed that creativity, above any other quality, was the key to success for the future (IBM Institute for Business Value, 2012). However, despite growing recognition of the importance of creativity to societies as a whole, arguments persist about its exact nature and role in human development and undertaking, as a result the creativity envisioned by the economic discourse may not necessarily reflect other theoretical views.

It is, however, agreed by many stakeholders in societies worldwide that creativity is something that needs embedding better into culture if it is to provide the types of economic benefits outlined above. Looking at the U.S. again, educational researchers such as Howard Gardner (2006) have long been at the forefront of this argument: he began promoting the idea of creative skills as practical skills at a time when this view was almost considered incendiary – creativity having been considered largely too 'soft' a skill to be essential. Some of these

researchers explicitly connect with the economic discourse surrounding creativity. Sternberg & Williams (1996), for example, build on Sternberg's own 'investment theory of creativity' (Sternberg & Lubart, 1995 in Sternberg & Williams, 1996) where creative thinkers are compared to good investors who 'buy low and sell high' (Sternberg & Williams, 1996): such thinkers develop ideas which may have been ignored, rejected or undervalued by the majority into fresh, valuable and desirable results. With this benefit in mind, Sternberg & Williams (1996) offer educators 25 strategies to help promote creativity in students. Interestingly, this approach offers both a theory model and a strategy that almost perfectly encapsulates the values of the society it comes from: as Hammerich & Lewis (2013) point out 'the business of America is business'. However, in spite of supportive voices, recent research in the U.S. seems to show that actual levels of creative thinking in children have been decreasing since the 1990s (Kim, 2011). This raises several questions: is it an example of the eternal 'gap between theory and practice' (Carr, 1980) or are there perhaps other factors at play?

The causes and consequences of this apparent decline in creative thinking have provoked recent discussion in the U.S. media and praise for British and European attempts to put creativity higher on the agenda (Bronson & Merryman, 2010). These European 'attempts' refer to initiatives such as those undertaken by the European Union to fund, develop and raise awareness about creativity at all levels. In 2010, a Green Paper was commissioned called 'Unlocking the potential of cultural and creative industries' (European Commission, 2010). This document cited the importance of creativity in adapting to a rapidly changing world and new technologies, setting out a series of recommendations on how best to develop this potential and was approved by the European Economic and Social Committee (Europe Innova, 2010).

A slew of projects in recent years show the support for fostering creativity: denoting 2009 as the European Year of Creativity and Innovation (EUROPA, 2009); holding international conferences such as 'Financing Creativity' (European Commission, 2014); funding projects such as CREA.RE which aim to exchange experiences across the countries of the EU to better embed creative and cultural industries in policy (CREA.RE, no date) – and much more. Though the Green Paper focused on industry, it refers several times to the vital role of education in fostering creativity, linking culture and education to 'promote creativity in a life-long perspective' (European Commission, 2010; p19). Politically at least, Europe and its member states appear to be committed to both fostering and harnessing creativity for future growth; what is not clear is how effectively this has been implemented, something this study is intending to investigate.



At the level of education in Europe, creativity has in recent decades found its way into policy documents and curriculums. In the previous chapter it was highlighted that research into Early Years education has tended to focus on the same well-known systems. Two of these systems are European: the Forest Schools originating in Scandinavia and the atelier-style approach of Reggio Emilia are internationally recognised as being exemplary methods for fostering creativity and their approaches are visited, studied and often adapted for use by practitioners and policy-makers worldwide, including the UK and Spain (Knight, 2009; Zabalza, 1996). The preceding chapter offered an overview of the two countries that form the setting of this investigation. Focusing on the curriculums that apply to the 3-4 year olds who are the subject of this particular investigation, we can see that England has identified 'creating and thinking critically' as part of a triumvirate of characteristics of effective teaching and learning, it also corrals traditionally creative skills into a 'specific area of learning and development' called Expressive Arts and Design (Department for Education, 2012a). The Catalan equivalent documentation also finds these skills to be essential, but rather than separating them out, takes the interesting approach of embedding them into the process of learning communication and languages (Departament d'Educació, 2008; Departament d'Educació, 2010). It is interesting that the one country chooses to separate out these skills whereas the other finds them indivisible from the essential function of expression. It may be useful to establish why this divergence might be the case, particularly if this investigation finds that such dispositions have an influence on how creativity is fostered.

In order to understand why these differences in approach may occur, perhaps looking at examples from further afield could help illuminate the issues at stake for policy makers and educationalists. While the remit of this particular thesis is set within Europe, it is suggested that comparative perspectives can be helpful in promoting reflection upon our own practices (May & Perry, 2011). Cheng (2004) highlighted that traditional systems of education in China have been widely criticised for not adequately promoting creativity in its children and that the Chinese government has endeavoured to change this, largely espousing the economic discourse highlighted earlier in this section. She also indicates that there is a gap between intended and actual practice – much like the case in the United States – and suggests that this may be due to a failure of some existing school cultures, assessment and teaching methods and other socio-cultural elements of schooling to keep pace with the policy change, stressing the potential for variation within one over-arching system (Cheng, 2004). Referring back to Carr's (1980) 'gap': that particular model indicated a discontinuity between teachers and the theory they were to espouse, with theory viewed by those teachers as manifesting itself as

impenetrable jargon unrelated to the real-life classroom. Cheng (2004), however, appears to be suggesting a rather more comprehensive issue that has roots in a range of areas not confined to professional training and dissemination of research. It would seem that the cultivation of creativity is beholden to quite a complex web of interacting factors.

Interestingly, Howard Gardner (2006) spent some time in China and discovered some striking cultural differences in approaches and attitudes towards creativity. These differences essentially boiled down to a variance in what is considered to be a desirable outcome: Chinese culture appeared to value a preferred end result - type of picture, a dance, mastery of a skill - whereas the West appeared to value equally, if not more, experimental processes along the way to the outcome (Gardner, 2006). In terms of areas we might consider to be more creative, such as the expressive arts, Gardner (2006) found these same attitudes prevailed: whereas in the West art may be valued as compelling, powerful and challenging, Chinese values favoured art that offered a culturally defined form of beauty and respite to the viewer. An explanation for these preferences might be found in China's history: in Lam's (1998) study of state sacrifices and music in the Ming Dynasty, he identifies that creativity was traditionally harnessed to the expression of ritual.

Considering this information in terms of the present day European context of this particular piece of research: what does this imply for the fostering of creativity in England and Catalonia? Looking at the place of creativity in Chinese culture provokes an important reflection: the place of creativity in a culture, and by extension its education, is a reflection of the values of the culture around it and a product of the history behind it. The role of creativity, whether in England or Catalonia, is a reflection of prevailing themes in the mirror of the cultural and social beliefs of the setting. Considering creativity in the current climate, the prevailing theme would appear to be an economic discourse of growth, yet how the fostering of creativity is realised may depend on cultural, educational and social traditions in each country: though the term 'setting' might equally be applied more locally owing to the potential for individual variation. This economic discourse may well be the underlying impetus for policy makers and early years practitioners to foster creativity today, but what does it mean in practice? The conceptualisation of creativity as a tool could be considered quite a narrow one; could such an approach hamper, rather than foster, creativity? This is a question that this investigation will endeavour to explore more fully.

## What is creativity?

Having explored the catalyst for this investigative narrative, this section is concerned with the preceding events, the historical context of creativity that has led to our current understanding of the subject. From looking at the current context it may be seen that creativity has come to be viewed as essential and as something that educators urgently need to promote in order to ensure future economic success. However, in order to promote creativity, it is important to first try to identify what it actually is: does this concept refer to a skill that can be learnt or is it an innate talent? And what is actually meant by creativity; is it the same as innovation, art or invention? Polysemy in a concept is not inherently unusual: Hammond & Wellington (2012) recognise that in contemporary thinking, most concepts are considered to be ambiguous. However, they add that this very ambiguity makes it all the more important to clarify the concepts used in an enquiry (Hammond, 2011). As a result, this section will endeavour to define creativity, if only to be clear about the parameters of this investigation. Perhaps for any investigation with creativity at its core, the first question that may be asked by the reader (and should therefore be addressed by the writer) is this: what exactly is this concept called creativity?

Though ambiguity may be the norm for most concepts, trying to pin down a definition of creativity is also arguably one of the most challenging aspects of promoting its value within education. Tina Bruce (2011), in her book 'Cultivating Creativity in Babies, Toddlers and Young Children' swiftly identifies this issue in her introduction, describing it as a 'complex concept' with implications for a wide range of fields beyond education and the arts as well as particular psychological impacts. Looking at literature throughout the ages, each theorist seems to have their own perspective on its nature, how it manifests, its importance and, overwhelmingly, its value. Though this may seem to discourage any clear picture of creativity being formed, Hammond & Wellington (2012) describe a concept as being 'a unit of meaning formed by comparing, and abstracting, common characteristics from different cases' (29). Bearing this in mind, this section will explore a range of perspectives on the nature of creativity, try to strip away those layers of value judgements and identify what they have in common. It is hoped that this process will leave a core of meaning that can be used to define creativity for the purposes of this enquiry.

The previous section of this chapter identified that the role of creativity in a culture or society is a result of its traditions, but it is also true that concepts may alter over time. Williams (1983) makes this point when considering the clichéd idea that generations 'don't speak the same

language' (11): he shows that this is literally true in the way that a concept such as 'art' has gone from predominantly meaning any sort of skill to the more abstract definition we have today. Therefore, in defining creativity, this section will consider creativity as an evolving concept, looking at examples from history up until the present day. Such a historically broad scope may mean that even the term 'creativity' may not be the one applied to the concept; this section will also include material that appears to address the notion of creativity, even if the writers in question may describe it in terms of imagination, invention or other appellations.

In beginning to explore the story of the concept of creativity, the narrative can be traced right back to the very beginning. The oldest monuments made with massive stones may be found in Western Europe, these, such as England's own Stonehenge, date back to the early Neolithic period, yet there is evidence of the existence of complex cultures representing their experiences in carving and architecture stretching back even farther (Lewis-Williams & Pearce, 2009). It is understood today that culture is the expression of humanity and the expression of its creativity (KEA European Affairs, 2009); to be human is to be part of a culture and to be creative. It is interesting to note that the Middle to the Upper-Palaeolithic period, when a great change in human social and subsistence practices took place used to be known as 'the creative explosion' because it was at this point that new tools, hunting methods, rituals and, importantly, art appeared to make a dramatic appearance (Lewis-Williams & Pearce, 2009). More recent research indicates that this process was rather more gradual than the word 'explosion' would suggest (Lewis-Williams & Pearce, 2009), but the term 'creativity' here applied to human advances suggests that it is a trait that was, and is integral to our evolution as well as our very humanity.

It has been suggested that the appearance of art in early human culture was not merely the manifestation of a need for communication or representation of day-to-day life: the often highly symbolic nature of Neolithic art suggests a grappling with the idea of consciousness, with the distinctions between thought, dreams and religious feeling (Lewis-Williams & Pearce, 2009). Creativity was thus not only applied practically to improve daily life, as highlighted in the previous paragraph, but also intellectually to try and make sense of human consciousness. The research into these processes in early humans also confirms modern views on neurological and psychological development: from the structure of the brain itself to consciousness and indeed our creative impulses, these areas develop in response to the society around the individual (Lewis-Williams & Pearce, 2009).

In terms of overt descriptions and perceptions about creativity, references to it may be found in the ancient Greek culture. As Greece is often considered to be the cradle of European culture, particularly in regard to literature (Thomas, 1992), ancient Greek literature may then be seen as providing the blueprints for modern literary culture both in the UK and Spain. Perhaps within these blueprints there are clues to the genesis of the concept of creativity that informs our thinking today. Creativity certainly appears in Ancient Greek mythology: like almost all religions and beliefs across time and history, save perhaps the Celts (Rolleston, 1986), these legends begin with one grand act of creation. According to the ancient Greeks, the creation of the world was brought about by the sexual union of two deities, then later in this mythological cycle there appear nine goddesses amongst their legion of descendants, who personified the impulses behind human creative acts – the Muses – each one representing a different discipline (Berens, 1894). Williams (1983) identifies that the traditional usage of the word 'create' was strongly connected to this divine context, though perhaps arriving in English through a particularly Christian filter. It has also been noted that the Ancient Greeks often suggested that inspiration for great acts may have been caused by some sort of 'divine madness' brought on by the gods (Ludwig, 1995) – and such a madness certainly proved dangerous for many human protagonists. Though the depiction of creativity in mythology may not reflect contemporary, secular views, it does offer an interesting perspective on how creativity has traditionally appeared in our cultural consciousness: as a higher force or power begetting something good and not necessarily within human control.

Beyond mythology, the Ancient Greeks left a legacy of philosophical thought which is still taught in both countries today – in fact, most university entrants in Spain are usually examined on this subject before selection (UNED, no date). Plato (428/427-348/347 BC in Plato & Jowett, 2010) gives a rather more human-centric view of the subject through the several references made to creativity in his Dialogues. In spite of this more secular perspective, nature is established as the principal creative force – and still has divine provenance – yet the soul is identified as the agent of human endeavour, which is referred to as 'art'. Art in this context refers to a much broader spectrum of activity than the modern definition, reflecting Williams' (1983) analysis of its changed meaning: it may include areas such as music and painting through to medicine and husbandry. The arts themselves are divided into two categories: the first, creative art is characterized by the 'power of producing' e.g. agriculture and pottery; the second, which gains what already exists, are acquisitive arts such as trade and hunting (Plato & Jowett, 2010). Plato also represents creative thought as something considered to be noble and essential to the development of a fair and just society (428/427-348/347 BC in Plato & Jowett,

2010). It is interesting to see here an equating of creativity with productivity and essential for the maintenance of contemporary society: it would appear that the economic discourse prevalent in current thinking may have its roots in perceptions that are thousands of years old.

Pursuing the trace of creativity in European philosophy, there are elements of interest to be found approximately two millennia later, in the writing of Rene Descartes (1637 & 1644). He does not use the words 'creativity' or 'creative' as such when referring to human activity; creation for him and the society he lived in was a word with largely theological connotations – continuing that divine association from early mythology. In spite of this, he does make reference to the role of imagination, which he sees as being one of the most important faculties of the mind along with will, memory and understanding. For Descartes (1637 & 1644) there is an overlap between imagination and reality, sensing and imagining are two forms of perception: concepts can have a reality in the mind. He argues that as such, imagination is one of the tools necessary for us to make sense of our reality, though he acknowledges that it may sometimes be flawed as we are flawed - naturally, we may imagine monsters.

This perspective has an interesting link with the earlier concept of 'divine madness': humans are traditionally said to be unable to cope with experiencing true divinity, hence Zeus's frequent disguised courtships (Berens, 1894) or the Christian God's use of an intermediary (Metatron) when speaking to Adam (Milton, 2012). There is a suggestion here that humans are not quite good enough, or are insufficiently capable of dealing with creative power, which is perhaps why earlier societies chose to characterize it as 'other'. Descartes (1637 & 1644) also finds that nothing may be imagined which has no basis in reality and so offers this as proof of the existence of God: for an educationalist, this could suggest that creativity is not in fact limitless, but is a product of its context. What is fascinating about Descartes' (1637 & 1644) interpretation in trying to find a definition for creativity is the idea that without the ability to imagine or think creatively, we are somehow not truly grasping the truth of our existence which as a result may hinder our growth and learning. This view of creativity is of something that transcends the merely practical, that is infused through human nature and, properly harnessed, elevates ourselves and our perceptions.

A century later, the writer and philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau was also intrigued by the power of the imagination, particularly regarding children's learning and development. Rousseau wrote his seminal work 'Emile, Or on Education' in 1762 and, in common with many modern reports on education, he was voicing concerns that prevalent methods of child-rearing were actually damaging to children and the flowering of their natural abilities. Instead, he

advocated an approach which allowed for the natural development of the child and the cultivation of their innate skills, regarding the faculty of imagination to be the first of the mental powers to manifest. Rousseau (1762) suggested that imagination has a far-reaching influence upon our abilities: opening us to the realms of possibility; inspiring hope and curiosity; facilitating our learning and enabling us to transcend our reality. This framing of imagination reflects Descartes' (1637 & 1644) view of its transcendent nature: it is a trait that is not only particularly human, but also allows us to become better humans.

Such a description of imagination correlates with contemporary conceptions of creativity as a means to adapt and progress, whether one takes the purely economic discourse or whether one is concerned with the realisation of the individual or the improvement of society like educationalists such as Rodrigo Martín & Rodrigo Martín (2012). Like Descartes (1637 & 1644), Rousseau (1762) contends that imagination has its drawbacks too, highlighting that where it is allowed to run riot, untethered from reality, it can be the cause of childhood terrors, reinforcing this idea of a force more powerful than ourselves. Principally though, the main problem for Rousseau (1762) was that imagination can cause suffering where the gap between what is imagined and what exists is too wide. This last point is interesting in terms of current attitudes towards creativity: a fear of disappointment, of not being able to live up to the imagined result, perhaps through lack of practical skills to realise the imagined image, maybe this could affect the development of creative expression in children and even constrain adults in modelling such processes too.

But what of those people who have been able to harness creativity? John Ruskin (1843-1870), was an art critic and an artist in his own right. Like Rousseau (1762) before him, he was an advocate of a more natural lifestyle, feeling that the society around them was becoming divorced from nature to the detriment of health, morals and progress (Ruskin, 1843-1870). For both of these writers, creativity or imagination was a naturally occurring faculty, but at the same time one which was considered may be at risk from societal factors and interference. Such views resonate with the classic early years education dichotomy: intervention versus cultivation, or instructivist versus constructivist approaches (Katz, 1999). They also appear to anticipate contemporary uneasiness from educational researchers (e.g. NACCCE, 1999; Tims, 2010) that current educational approaches may be preventing rather than promoting creativity.

Discussing the concept, Ruskin (1843-1870) uses the terms 'imaginative' and 'imagination' most frequently, but also employs 'creative' as a description both for people and for the

'power'. Interestingly, he identifies two 'orders' of poets: 'creative' ones such as Shakespeare and Dante and 'Reflective or Perceptive' ones such as Wordsworth and Keats (1843-1870). This would seem to suggest that he identifies a type of meta-creativity; there is the act of creating the art itself: the poem, the picture etc., but certain artists also create a world, rather than simply reflecting it. Ruskin (1843-1870) took the view that a highly creative person requires a high level of strength in order to harness the force of this particular power and that strength can only be attained through reflection and knowledge. It is interesting that even a creative person acknowledges that while creativity may be a natural human trait that is vulnerable to external influences, to utilize it effectively requires a degree of mastery and indeed preparation.

Both of the preceding writers appear to suggest that creativity needs protection from societal influences, but is the effect of society on creativity always toxic? The first section of this chapter noted how culture and society have had a profound influence on Chinese conceptions of creativity, channelling it in a particular way. Similarly, culture and creativity are deeply connected in Catalonia. Ostensibly, the conception of creativity found in Catalan academic writing on the subject appears to chime with that in the United Kingdom, often focusing on theorists such as Gardner and Sternberg (Ribe et al., 1997), researchers from the United States whose influence is apparent in much English material on the subject (e.g. NACCCE, 1999). Creativity in Catalonia is also given a wide-focus application, not confined to arts; Ribe et al. (1997) describe it as an intellectual exercise between what there is and what is possible, corresponding with views from UK theorists such as Anna Craft (2008).

Beyond these similarities in perception of what creativity is and can do, Catalan culture has some particular beliefs about where creativity comes from and what it can be used for that are strongly connected to ideas of nationhood: the creative itself act can be viewed as nationalist and the nation itself as uniquely creative. These ideas surface in the work of Francesc Pujols - a philosopher, writer and art critic, who lived from 1882 to 1962. His work is quite obscure outside his own country, but in Catalonia he is considered to have had a great influence on Catalan art and thinking: including the great architect Antoni Gaudí and Salvador Dalí, who was said to be particularly influenced by his work, even translating some of his books into French (Generalitat de Catalunya, 2012). Pujols (2012) contended that there is a way of thinking that is unique to Catalonia, stemming back to Ramon Llull in the 13<sup>th</sup> century, who was the first known Catalan writer and philosopher. His argument was that Catalan thinking occupies a position between Northern and Southern approaches, between the spiritual and the material;



Pujols (2012) believed this to be a reflection of Catalonia's geographic position, characterising it as the land of truth.

This Catalan method of thinking was said to be firmly realist and able to use reason to prove the existence of articles of faith (Pujols, 2012). In terms of creative expression, Pujols (2012) affirmed that the Catalan approach, whether to invention, art, science or law, is unique and superior in that it does not remake reality but observes it, contrasting with Ruskin's (1843-1870) identification of 'creative' poets – the Catalan way is to find beauty in truth. Pujols (2012) also believed that Lull had laid the foundations for Catalan literature both literally and philosophically: his use of the Catalan language was remarkable not only for not being Latin, but also in the way it was used: clear and accessible to all rather than aimed at an intellectual élite. Many of these characteristics, realism, reason, faith, truth, beauty and accessibility, may be said to manifest themselves in some of the greatest examples of Catalan creative expression. Returning to Gaudí, his masterwork the Sagrada Família is both spiritual and true to the world around it: the architecture combines Christian symbolism with a structure inspired by the study of nature (Llacay Pintat et al., 2006), resulting in a construction of outstanding beauty and originality for the whole city to share.

Of course, England has a fantastic patrimony in all these areas and has probably originated many more ideas, inventions, trends and approaches than Catalonia has ever done, though it does, of course have size, wealth and political advantage on its side. What it does not have is a singular defining philosophy nor does it appear to consistently draw such a deep connection between the soul of the nation and its creative expressions. Yet whether either of these nations' modus operandi can be deemed as actively conducive to fostering creativity is something that needs to be addressed by this study. It should not be assumed that Pujols' (2012) theory is necessarily shared by all, and indeed the provider of his foreword, Ramon Alcoberro (in Pujols, 2012), recognised a degree of humour in his writing – writing that could be said to fly in the face of clarity with its recourse to metaphor and dearth of full-stops. However, Francesc Pujols remains a celebrated influence on Catalan thinking.

If creativity and its expression may be tied to nationhood, it may also be gendered. Virginia Woolf (1929) wrote about the conditions necessary for the creative act to occur in 'A Room of One's Own': a meditation on her own creative struggles as a writer. For Woolf (1929) there were certainly social as well as intellectual, educational and emotional aspects to creativity, whether these created barriers or facilitated the process. Woolf (1929) was concerned with the idea that people, in particular women, may be prevented from fulfilling their potential,

from producing great works, ideas or inventions because they are constrained by the whole structure of the society around them. She identified sex differences in the relative investment into higher education at that time (the 1920s), and observed differences by gender not just in the subjects and number of seats available for learning, but also in access to ancient libraries and the quality of food and surroundings.

Woolf (1929) also discussed the traditional expectations that are placed upon a woman's life and behaviour, alongside the lack of personal and financial freedom which she felt had conspired over the years to ensure that such a person as 'Shakespeare's sister' had never materialised. The two factors that Woolf (1929) keeps returning to as being essential for her creative act to take place are a space to do it and money: even though she highlights these in relation to female self-determination only, it could be argued that they remain important considerations for anyone - especially in this time of cuts resulting from austerity measures. Creativity may not be fostered by simply 'throwing money' at children, but surely adequate resources, including time and space, must be provided in order for this to take place.

Woolf (1929) was by no means alone in her observations about gender and creativity: though society has undeniably changed over the years, the idea that societal assumptions about a person's gender may affect their creative expression is one that many female writers have returned to, from Simone de Beauvoir (1949) in 'The Second Sex', through Erica Jong (1974) in 'Fear of Flying' up to Caitlin Moran (2011) in 'How to be a Woman'. These books all point towards persistent problems regarding notions about how a man is able to behave and how a woman is supposed to behave, to the point where these ideas can enter the creative woman's own psyche and impede her self-realisation. de Beauvoir (1949) found that women's forays into creative areas were often dismissed as 'ladies' work', a means to distract themselves from boredom, and criticized the fact that society allows men the liberty to quite literally follow their own path; able to be alone with their thoughts and ideas where a woman had to be escorted. Jong (1974) perhaps encountered greater physical freedom, yet still identified the difficulty in trying to be, and be recognised, as a 'poet not a secretary' while Moran (2011) finds still in modern culture a lack of female 'greats': no female group to rival Led Zeppelin.

The threads of prejudice and expectation identified in these examples of feminist literature are embodied in the principles of the research carried out by Florida et al. (2011) and their identification of 'Tolerance' as one of the variables for their Global Creativity Index. This research, as highlighted earlier, suggested that tolerance for those traditionally outside the mainstream and openness to their contributions makes for a more creative environment for all

(Florida et al., 2011). As such, this research project must consider the effect of gender-beliefs on the fostering of creativity of young children, as well as any other assumptions that might be made about children and their capabilities, and perhaps their race, class or specific needs too. Cultural expectations may find their way into the curriculum and into professional practice, impacting on the creative development of children.

The literature thus far indicates that the narrative of creativity is closely intertwined with the narrative of the culture in which it finds itself. While this literature has shed a great deal of light on how creativity may be affected by the world around it and what it may be judged to represent, the creative act is usually carried out by the individual, so it is necessary to explore a little more deeply what creativity represents for that individual. Clues to this may be found in the work of the psychoanalysts, who have been interested in creativity throughout the history of their science. For Freud (1899), creativity was one of those natural human faculties that could be negatively affected by the intellect, which constrained the imagination by overly analysing creative thought. Freud (1908) appears to link creativity to the libido: he regarded most cultural activities as sublimations of the erotic instinct, though he did not feel that this drive was a finite resource, stating that he felt that sexual satisfaction was integral to the artistic process.

Freud (1908) did not subscribe to prevalent views in his time regarding the importance of self-control and mastery of the instincts if an individual is to achieve great things, rather he felt that a person's attitude towards their erotic life would mirror their public life: someone who is proactive in seeking satisfaction will do the same in other areas, an individual who represses their instincts will lack the courage to attain their own ambitions, he did not feel that abstinence produced 'energetic, self-reliant men of action, nor original thinkers, bold pioneers and reformers' (Freud, 1908 p9). Freud (1908), like the creative women in the preceding paragraphs, also drew attention to sexual inequality. Where the writers above looked at a complex web of barriers including resourcing, definitions of 'women's work' and family, for Freud (1908) the biggest barrier to women's intellectual development and cultural contribution boiled down to the sheer inequality regarding sanctioned sexual behaviour of the sexes. Freud (1908), the double-standards around sex meant that, for women, taboos regarding curiosity about sex gradually became taboos about curiosity of all kinds, stymieing intellectual development. Though Freud's (1908) framing of the issue as a sexual one is a particularly distinct approach, it is the same themes that are emerging through the literature:

of creativity as a natural human trait and of the strong impact that social mores can have upon its expression.

A later practitioner of psychoanalysis, Donald Winnicott (1971), was also a paediatrician and the interplay between these two fields gave rise to some extremely interesting ideas regarding how the behaviour of babies and young children reflects the developing personality. Part of his work explored the origins of creativity, which Winnicott (1971) expressly divorced from solely artistic pursuits, concurring with Descartes' (1637 & 1644) model of an approach to external reality that is inherent in us all: he describes it as a Universal, saying 'It belongs to being alive.' (Winnicott, 1971: 91). For Winnicott (1971), the development of creativity was rooted in children's play, he regarded the freedom to play, experiment and immerse oneself in an activity as essential to its adult manifestation; but play was not only central to the creative process, the freedom to play and be creative was the only means by which the individual may discover their self. In terms of early years practice, it is possible that considering the activities that Winnicott (1971) identified – play, experimentation and immersion - may enable the practitioner to measure the effectiveness of their practice. Though conceptions of what creativity is may be subjective and vary from person to person and culture to culture, many modern researchers have used the idea that if certain behaviours are conducive to fostering creativity, measuring whether these behaviours are present can help to establish whether it is being fostered (e.g. Sternberg & Williams, 1996; Craft, 2008). Winnicott (1971) also strongly links the subjugation of creative expression with a range of pathologies he encountered through during his practice. This association lends a degree of moral imperative to the fostering of creativity: it is not simply a natural trait, but essential to wellbeing.

Curiously, in contrast to Winnicott's (1971) point of view, Tina Bruce (2011) suggests that one of the problems that can face the practitioner who wishes to promote creativity is the existence of a prevailing myth that associates it with mental ill-health. Though the aforementioned psychoanalysts regarded the freedom to be creative as being conducive to mental well-being and vice-versa, it seems that there is a persistent negative connection between the two in the popular imagination. It is possible that such an association may have been drawn from the lives of the many famous and creative people who throughout history have found themselves subject to devastating mental illnesses of varying kinds.

Virginia Woolf was such a person: greatly intelligent and creative, but also known to have suffered a series of mental breakdowns, which culminated in drowning herself in an effort to escape the cycle (notes on the author, in Woolf, 1929). Examples of the tortured artist may be

found throughout history: the so-called 'cursed poets' of France – Baudelaire, Verlaine and Rimbaud; Van Gogh and his ear; the massed ranks of musicians from Beethoven through to Amy Winehouse who have been intent on destroying themselves through drink, drugs, self-harm or suicide. When examined objectively it is clear that a handful of tragedies cannot represent scientific evidence, the existence of such stories can appear to support the myth. Superficially all these people are connected through their creativity though, delving deeper, the real reasons behind these talented people's actions become less and less clear. Woolf was known to have had a traumatic childhood (notes on the author, in Woolf, 1929), Verlaine was prone to alcoholism (Valiunas, 2012) and the pressures of fame itself have been documented to have their own effects on the wellbeing of people in the public eye (see Giles, 2000). It is difficult to use these examples as proof of a positive correlation between creativity and mental illness.

In exploring the supposed relationship between creativity and madness, the American psychiatrist Ludwig (1995) highlights the belief held by the ancient Greek culture that certain types of madness —identified as 'divine madness'— were the generative impetus behind many great human undertakings including art and love. Such evidence indicates that this is a connection which has long been present in European consciousness. Ludwig (1995) himself, however, tends to agree with Aristotle in critiquing this notion and portrays creativity as a natural occurrence, which may be susceptible to the conditions around it. He argues that though the findings of his own studies on women writers appear to have observed a greater incidence of mental illness and/or trauma in this group, the fact that scores of respected, successful and well-adjusted creative people have also existed throughout history would seem to negate this connection (Ludwig, 1995). Henry Moore and Henri Matisse are two such examples identified by Ludwig (1995) - was Van Gogh really artistically any better? There are many who would find beauty and merit in all their works.

Ludwig (1995) suggests that part of the reason for the bias in perception is a result of misconceptions about what creativity is: from comparing people who are in the public eye and people who are not, Ludwig (1995) shows that the role of people who are drawn to creative-type lifestyles is not necessarily always creative. A modern example of this may be found in the role of the pop star, perhaps Britney Spears, who suffered a well-documented breakdown a few years ago. While her profession may be regarded as an example of a creative art, the sheer lack of creative control such a person has over their output, from lyrics to performance, would appear to give the lie to this perception. It is worth considering that if Winnicott (1971)

is correct in his views regarding the necessity of creative expression for health, what effect might these strictures have had on her state of mind?

In spite of the voices defending the role of creativity in mental health, there still remain professionals who take the opposing view. Psychologists Runco & Richards (1997) collected together a series of studies (including Ludwig's aforementioned study) that appeared to support the connection between mental ill-health and creativity. However, some of the evidence provided is more persuasive than others. For example: in 1987 Nancy Andreasen found that 80% of the writers she had studied had experienced an episode of affective illness at some point (in Runco & Richards, 1997), which appears quite damning, though it should be noted covers a sample of 30 people. Less persuasive are the findings from Kay Redfield Jamison's 1989 study that found just over a third of the British artists and writers she had studied had sought treatment for mood disorders: though Runco & Richards (1997) point out that only a third of sufferers of mood disorders generally were known to seek treatment, this figure still represents a minority of the whole group.

It is important to place these figures into context with the general population: current statistics available from the Mental Health Foundation (no date) indicate that 1 in 4 adults in the UK will experience at least one diagnosable issue in any year. This last study was carried out on 8,800 people nationwide, whereas Redfield Jamison's (1989 in Runco & Richards, 1997) covered 47 people. Even if this last sample were representative, finding that a third of creative people have suffered mental ill-health is not the same as saying that creativity and mental illness are inextricably linked, particularly where a quarter of them were likely to have suffered such issues regardless of their profession. Ludwig (1995) also raised the question about incidences and the effects of mental disturbances in other, less obviously creative, professions too, though unfortunately did not draw any particular conclusions. Yet a press release issued in April 2014 by the Association of Teachers and Lecturers in the UK disclosed that, from a sample of 900 education professionals, 55% felt their job had impacted negatively on their mental health and 68% routinely hide mental health issues. The existence of such a survey not only shows that there are concerns about the mental health in regard to other, specific professions, but these results provide a convincing picture of another profession, not necessarily creative, whose representatives appear to experience even higher incidences of mental illness.

There are two elements to the supposed link between creativity and mental illness that manifest in the research: one is that creativity can be a symptom in itself, outlined by Runco & Richards (1997) in their association of creativity with the manic periods experienced by bipolar

disorder sufferer; the other is that in seeking to be creative, the individual somehow opens the door to mental health issues, that creativity requires accessing irrationality or regression to primitive states of mind (Neihart, 1998). Both of these assumptions could be considered unhelpful to individuals in either camp: those who champion or pursue creativity find their activities associated with an unhealthy state; those who suffer mental illness may find their conditions fetishised, or, if they are unable to express themselves creatively, rejected for not manifesting the 'right' kinds of behaviours. The prevalence of this link is one that some creative people have recognised and taken issue with: Dalí famously declared that the only difference between himself and a madman was that he was not mad (La Cossitt, 1956), perhaps a response to his interviewer's assumptions about his mental health. It should also be noted that within psychiatric practice, activities that encourage creative expression are welcomed for their healing properties as they are assumed to assist with self-expression and resolving conflict amongst other benefits (Neihart, 1998).

The evidence for the link between creativity and mental illness is perhaps no more persuasive than the popular imagining of link between mental illness and aggression: not all people who suffer from mental illness are aggressive and not all aggressive people are mentally ill. If creativity may be considered a trait, like gregariousness or determination, it is possible that distribution across the whole of the population would be no more than normal, with variances caused by personal inclinations and environmental factors, not necessarily linked to pathologies. Whether or not this is true, it appears from the literature that the idea of creativity can have the capacity to induce unease and perhaps also represent something tainted, dangerous or even aberrant, which may hinder attempts to foster it in children and professional practice.

This sense of unease regarding creativity is not confined to its supposed relationship to poor mental health. There have long been concerns that creativity may be conducive to disorder and anarchy, another of the 'myths' noted by Bruce (2011). Though as with creativity and madness, the links are not particularly clear-cut. The lone wolf, the outsider, the eccentric may certainly be viewed with suspicion by the rest of society for challenging norms, but there is a definite link in cultural consciousness between creativity and socially aberrant behaviour. After all, in the English language alone we find phrases such as 'being creative with the truth' and 'creative accounting' as synonyms for lying and fraud respectively.

This unease has been picked up on most recently by a research paper from Harvard Business School called 'The Dark Side of Creativity: Original Thinkers Can Be More Dishonest' (Gino &

Ariely, 2011). This paper refers to the idea of the 'evil genius' and cites the fraudster Bernie Madoff as an example of a real-life creative criminal (Gino & Ariely, 2011). The paper goes on to outline five studies that were carried out by the researchers to explore the link between creativity and dishonesty, finding a highly positive relationship between the two: creative people were more likely to behave dishonestly and were more adept at justifying their behaviour (Gino & Ariely, 2011). If creative thinking is associated with thinking 'outside the box', it can also be used for the finding of loopholes. The authors do acknowledge the benefits of creativity to society as a whole, but they believe that understanding this association between creativity and dishonesty is important if disasters like the financial crash are to be avoided in the future (Gino & Ariely, 2011). This is an interesting point for those politicians, industrialists and educationalists who wish to push creativity up the agenda: rather than singling out this particular aspect is there not an argument for embedding it within a broader vision of being human?

The notion that creativity may somehow precipitate disorder and anarchy at a wider level is connected to the idea that creativity is not simply a process that takes place within the confines of the individual's psyche. Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi (1999) asserts that though many psychologists have traditionally assumed that creativity was an intrapsychic process, it is actually indivisible from the cultural and social systems around it and may occur at individual, group or both levels simultaneously. Csikszentmihalyi (1999) describes creativity as implying a change in memes, the units of imitation that form the basis of culture. Writing could be considered a meme, it is an idea that various cultures have repeated over time and it has evolved through creative applications from simple, single purpose symbols to a complex system that may be used by people and machines for a wide range of purposes. According to Csikszentmihalyi (1999), throughout history, memes have been most likely to change where culture and resources are open to the wider population and where that population receives influences external to their culture, for example ports and trading posts receiving traffic from around the world – much like Barcelona in fact. He argues that cultures where domains such as religion, art, science and philosophy are closely linked and hierarchical in nature are likely to resist novelty, because here creativity means overthrowing established norms, threatening the social structure (Csikszentmihalyi, 1999). This idea is reflected in the present-day Creativity Index (Florida et al., 2011) referred to in the preceding section, which emphasized the importance of openness for creativity to flourish.



Though certain cultures may fear creativity for inducing anarchy, it is important to distinguish between two types of anarchy: though Simonton (in Runco & Richards (1997) described both as 'societal madness', he identifies political anarchy, which is induced by those already in power, as significantly different to anarchy led by the people. Simonton (in Runco & Richards (1997) found there was actually an inverse relationship between political anarchy and creativity with a generational effect, saying that where there is political unrest for one generation, the creativity of the following one is likely to be negatively affected. This could be a consequence of the consuming effort of simply trying to survive during times of upheaval. Regarding civil disobedience, Simonton (in Runco & Richards, 1997) affirms that creative activity can increase both simultaneously and in the period immediately after this type of action. During such periods, creativity may emerge through a necessity of finding a different way to do something, such as using spiritual songs containing coded messages to help the slaves in America escape on the Underground Railroad (Pathways to Freedom, 2014). Creative expression may also emerge as the different groups attempt to claim territory, proclaim identity, memorialise the fallen or disseminate ideology as in the case of the multitude of murals that have appeared across the city of Belfast since before the Troubles began (Jarman, in Buckley, 1998).

Simonton (in Runco & Richards, 1997) suggested that the rise in creativity towards the end of socially traumatic events is often linked to a desire to revitalise the landscape. Looking at the case of the city centre riots across the UK in 2011, though the riots themselves were viewed as a largely destructive phenomenon, they gave rise to a beautiful burst of civic creativity in the form of the Peckham Peace Wall, a spontaneous project by the residents covering broken and boarded up windows with Post-It papers bearing messages of peace and local pride (Williams, 2012). This action has now been immortalised in the town square as a permanent work of public art. Though creativity may appear to flourish during periods of social unrest, like rosebay willow herb on bombsites, Simonton (in Runco & Richards, 1997) found no instance where creativity was actually a cause of the anarchy. Instead creativity was largely found to manifest as a product of a balanced and healthy society. Though incidences of creative expression may be predicted according to societal indicators, it would appear that it is in itself an indicator of the health of the surrounding society.

Fear of the consequences or the origins of creativity is not the only factor in its apparent sidelining in wider culture. Bruce (2011) identifies a third myth surrounding creativity: that it is bound up with talent, genius or performance. Most contemporary researchers agree that this

is not the case, but that each of us has different requirements or outlets for the expression of our innate abilities, which Sir Ken Robinson (2009) describes as our 'element'. If, owing to a variety of circumstances, including (as Gardner (2006) amongst others suggests) a schooling that is not equipped to nurture these unique abilities, we may not find our 'element' and we may look at the work of artists, writers or singers and assume that we are not creative because we cannot do what they can do. What most of the contemporary creativity researchers agree upon is that creativity is a thread that runs through human life to greater and lesser degrees. Anna Craft (2008) uses the terms 'high c' and 'little c' to represent each end of a creativity spectrum, which runs from deliberately creative work such as design or computer programming to the more quotidian example of someone simply thinking about a situation slightly differently. This perspective means that both the Michelin-starred Catalan chef Ferran Adrià and the student who has created a new pasta sauce from what is left in the cupboard are being creative, but to different degrees. Not ghettoising creative thinking into artistic disciplines alone means that Alexander Fleming, Tim Berners Lee and Jimi Hendrix may all be considered examples of 'high c' creative thinkers in their respective fields.

The myth of talent may support another fallacy that Bruce (2011) identifies as undermining creative practice: that disability is a bar to creativity. Bruce (2011) discredits this notion by arguing that society has moved from believing that children with certain circumstances were uneducable: over the last 50 years or so great advances have been made in the area of Special Educational Needs, enabling more equitable access to play and learning. Bruce (2011) agrees with Winnicott (1971) that there is a strong parallel between play and creativity and believes that it is possible to foster creativity in all children by adapting to the particular needs of each child. For society as a whole, propagating the message that creativity is attainable will hopefully begin to awaken people to the idea that creativity is inclusive, perhaps creating an impetus to try and reach their full potential. Where creativity ceases to be the property of the talented élite but is recognised as a tool to be used in everyday life, it becomes a much more attractive and practical attribute to have and indeed, taking into account the work of Florida et al. (2011) and Csikszentmihalyi (1999), it would appear that opening creative opportunities to all can only strengthen the culture.

So far, much of this literature has focused on what creativity represents, but has yet to edge nearer to an actual definition. Though many different theorists have addressed creativity as part of wider themes they have wished to explore, it is only latterly that creativity has become a focus in itself, particularly regarding education. It is also important to recognise that some

theorists whose legacy has become associated with creativity may not actually have offered a workable description. An example of this is Rudolf Steiner: today's Steiner Waldorf schools strongly emphasise creative play as a primary aspect of the curriculum (Oldfield, 2001), but Steiner's (1924) own theories on the subject reflect his personal beliefs, where artistic ability is a result of the child's physical integration with its spiritual self. Steiner's (1924) particular beliefs included an idea that children were created as spirits descended down into physical bodies and it took some years, and a good education naturally, for this spirit to meld with its physical host and access its true abilities. While Steiner's (1924) Anthroposophical views could be considered niche, particularly his description of this particular process, the connection between creativity and wholeness of the self is certainly reflected in the work of later theorists like Winnicott (1971). The latter part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century saw a rise in people from varying fields for whom creativity was their main focus, and it was these people who began to formulate concrete definitions. Still, within these definitions there remains some conflict over what creativity actually is.

The psychologist and educationalist Jerome Bruner discussed the concept of creativity quite extensively. In his essay 'The Conditions of Creativity' (Bruner, 1962) he argued, in apparent contradiction to such voices as Runco & Richards (1997), that within Western culture the creative individual is perceived as a whole individual because they are able to attain the true heights of human achievement. This would seem to suggest that a person who is unable to express themselves creatively is somehow diminished or barred from realizing their full potential. Bruner (1975) also described creativity as having the power to reorder thought and experience, which allows us to adapt to our circumstances. He singled out this particular quality in the journal article 'The Role of the Researcher as an Advisor to the Educational Policy Maker' (Bruner, 1975,) highlighting it as an essential tool in order for our society to survive in the face of constant progress: exactly the arguments put forward by so many contemporary sources (e.g. NACCCE, 1999; Tims, 2010 ).

In terms of a definition, Jerome Bruner (1962) provided this: 'An act that produces *effective surprise*'. However, and problematically for this study, Bruner (1962) invokes the importance of the beholder in this process. Such a requirement could be viewed as overly subjective and ultimately makes creativity reducible to a product. If one wishes to measure creativity, who is to say that what is surprising to one person will be so for another? A daydreamer may peer from a window at some slowly circling gulls and dream of using those air currents to soar just like them, but a glider pilot already knows that this is possible. Fortunately, Bruner (1962) does

address this by suggesting that certain characteristics may be observed from the engagement of the individual in their activity, do they explore a range of options, for example? If these features are observed to be present in the process, then it may be identified as creative. In spite of the seriousness attached to promoting creativity, Bruner (1962) demands that we protect it from becoming too worthy, which would surely exacerbate the reticence of the wider population towards it, and that we recognise the fun, 'the flying of kites' that lies at its heart.

Bruner's work in education went on to influence a later psychologist who worked for him for a while: Howard Gardner, who has a particular specialism in creativity. Gardner (2006) reported that when he first began working for Project Zero in the late Sixties, a project concerned with examining learning processes at Harvard University, the idea that creative skills could be practical was considered almost incendiary at the time. The project was overseen by a philosopher called Nelson Goodman who Gardner (2006) described as saying that to make a person more creative one should 'Create obstacles and make sure they are productive ones'. Though Gardner appears to have a misattributed definition of creativity floating around the internet, he was actually in agreement with Csikszentmihalyi (1999) in that asking what creativity is was the wrong question; we should be asking where creativity is (Gardner, 1993). For both of them, creativity is an interactive process that takes place between the individual or talent, the domain or discipline in which that individual is currently working and the surrounding field or culture. For Gardner (2006) it was important that creativity should not be considered an 'intelligence', as it may manifest itself across the different types of intelligences, from linguistic to existential, and conversely that it cannot manifest in the abstract, it surfaces *through* the different intelligences, in varying domains or disciplines.

In keeping with this pan-intelligence view, Gardner (1993) dismissed the idea that there could only be one type of creativity as 'a myth', choosing diverse examples of great thinkers from Gandhi to Eliot as examples of what a creative mind might achieve. Gardner (1993) also insists that creativity is inherently subjective, that an activity can only be judged to be creative through the evaluation of the particular culture around it. As a result, nothing may be regarded as creative before evaluation, it can only be assumed to be 'potentially creative'. As before, this raises issues regarding how, precisely, one can measure if creativity is being fostered, and more seriously, considering the remit of this investigation: if creativity can only be identified as such by the particular culture around it, can an outsider ever really assess it? Creativity, like beauty, would appear to be in the eye of the beholder.

Subjectivism is a recurring problem that different researchers have tried to deal with in different ways. Researchers who have favoured the psychoanalytic narratives around creativity acknowledge this quality, but also simply accept it. For others, such as the Behaviourists, observability and measurability have paramount importance: B.F. Skinner (1953), one of the lead representatives of this school of thought, found the whole psychoanalytic model of human behaviour to be over-reliant on subjective judgements. For Skinner (1953), all types of behaviour evolve because they contribute to the advancement of the species as a whole and at an individual level because they produce significant consequences for the person in question; that is to say that activity is undertaken in the pursuit of extrinsic reward. Extrapolating up from basic food, sex, shelter and other basic reward-seeking behaviour, Skinner (1953) surmises that the person engaged in creative expression is merely exploring the matters that they find 'reinforcing', in this case the reward comes in the form of their particular themes of interest. For Skinner (1953), whether or not these expressions were found popular by society as a whole was a reflection on how many other people found them reinforcing too, which would appear to chime with Gardner's (1993) contention regarding the judgement of society in establishing whether creativity has occurred. Skinner (1953) felt that within the creative act there were several levels of reinforcement taking place, some within the individual themselves such as the pursuit of personal interest and the pleasure of mastery of the physical world, others stemming from the reaction of others through interest, approval, kudos or tokens such as money or grades.

In terms of what is actually happening during creative thinking, which Skinner (1953) recognised as occurring in science as much as art, he felt that it could be broken down into basic functional processes. According to the Behaviourist model, the human is constantly reacting to its environment; how it reacts is a consequence of the previous experiences that have informed the individual, so problem solving is simply the process of rearranging and reviewing pre-existing responses from that individual's experience (Skinner, 1953). As a result of this perpetual loop, Skinner (1953) contended that many apparently original ideas are not so novel; they are simply reformulations of previous approaches. He does, however acknowledge that originality springs from the particular combinations that an individual may produce as a consequence of their particular history (Skinner, 1953), which does once again raise the issue of subjectivity in discerning what is creative or not. Skinner (1953) also did not feel it was important to wonder where ideas came from as it should be no more surprising than any other organism's response to any given situation; Bruner's (1962) surprises and kite-flying have no place in this model.

In spite of these views, Skinner (1953) does acknowledge that there are certain fields and certain activities in which it can be difficult to ascertain the motivation of the individual, giving the pursuit of higher-level Mathematics as one such example. This area is one that later critics of the Behaviourists picked up on: it was noted both in animal and human behaviour that sometimes the individual pursues an activity for its own sake, for some kind of intrinsic reward that is difficult to understand (Wood, 1998). It is interesting that this model cannot fully divest creativity of its subjectivity, and despite ideological differences with psychoanalytical perspectives, there are still many points of agreement here: creativity is a natural human process and it is influenced by experience. What is still not clear is how, precisely, creativity may be recognised: Skinner (1953) seems to acknowledge two layers, that which is original to the individual and that which is original to the wider society, yet he does not prioritise one over the other per se, he simply acknowledges that for the creative act to become successful beyond the individual context, it must submit to the judgement of others.

In recent years, probably one of the most globally influential figures promoting the importance of creativity is Sir Ken Robinson. Robinson's (2001) definition of creativity places him squarely within the modern understanding of this term as being synonymous with originality, innovation and by extension productive (Williams, 1983). In 2006 he recorded a talk for the popular ideas community TED called 'How schools kill creativity.' which has received 26,398,626 views, been subtitled into 58 languages and remains their most viewed talk ever (TED, no date). Anecdotally, I can attest to this talk receiving mentions on Education degree courses in several universities. He led the commission that produced the NACCCE report that this thesis has made several references to and has worked in many ambits from academia to collaborations with international governments, industry and non-profit organisations. It could be argued that Sir Ken Robinson's work may well have contributed greatly to the phenomenon that engendered this very research project: the ascendancy of creativity in global discourse.

Robinson (2001) is a true evangelist and uses research and experience to outline not just what he finds creativity to be and why it is important, but what should and can be done to promote it in his book 'Out of Our Minds: Learning to be Creative'. Robinson (2001) places an expressly subjective interpretation onto creativity, and it may be this that has caused his work to become so popular outside the ambit of the arts: for him creativity is the process of developing original ideas of value. As with the previous concerns regarding who 'judges' creativity, this raises the question of who decides the value of the idea? Robinson (2001) is concerned that prevailing systems of education are damaging creative potential, but perhaps the requirement

for there to be an extrinsic value on a creative act may be equally damaging if validation is not forthcoming or merit not recognised. Such an outcome is perfectly possible; after all there have famously been many greatly creative people whose work was not acknowledged until after their death including Van Gogh, Kafka and Galileo, often leading them to stop working or even to penury and early death.

Like several of the writers this literature review has addressed, from Plato (in Plato & Jowett, 2010) onwards, Robinson (2001) believes creativity to be an innate human attribute which is not confined to accepted ideas about the arts – though he certainly draws heavily on examples from this area - but finds it to exist in every sphere of human endeavour. His work shows an affinity with Gardner's (2006) theories of Multiple Intelligence in that he suggests that creativity is most easily accessed when the would-be creator is immersed in their 'element' (Robinson, 2009), as explained earlier in this chapter. In spite of this focus on individual ability, Robinson (2001) does not view creativity as belonging exclusively to the realm of the personal, in fact he strongly believes that sharing ideas is essential to develop creative potential and believes it is vital to nurture creative cultures that will help generate such ideas. For Robinson (2001), like the psychoanalysts, creativity is the result of the human being running at their optimum level. He identifies too that creativity is at the mercy of the culture around it, though he lays the blame for a perceived failure to adequately foster creativity at the feet of schools, the machines that propagate the culture.

Robinson (2001) expressly views schools and universities as sorting houses and bilious, belching factories, shuffling drones into pre-fabricated roles and suppressing natural capacities. Some researchers, however, point to the good work that some schools and professionals are doing to promote creativity and try to establish how that practice might be adopted more widely. Anna Craft (2008) has done a great deal of work in the field and aims her findings at professionals, particularly in early years education, to help them improve their practice. In doing so, she has reached some interesting conclusions regarding the nature of creativity and has begun to approach a method for dealing with the perennial issue of recognising creativity. Craft's (2008) definition of creativity is 'possibility thinking': for her, creativity is the ability to identify the range of opportunities that may exist within a given situation. This could be described in terms of Gibson's (1986) Theory of Affordances: the human or animal responds to the conditions of its environment by exploring the possibilities for action available. An example of this would be the potentials that lie within the receipt of a small object, say a penny: this article could be used in a multiplicity of ways often beyond its

stated purpose: to exchange for goods, to save, as a plectrum, a counter-balance, a door-stop. This view of creativity lends credence to the idea that creativity can help people to address issues resulting from swiftly changing social, economic and environmental climates: it makes us adaptable, as Bruner (1975) and others contend.

In terms of identifying creativity in action, Craft (2002 in Burnard et al., 2006) conceptualised possibility thinking as a process of both problem-finding and problem-solving that has several core features: Posing questions, Play, Innovation, Being Imaginative, Self-determination, Risk, Development and Action. These features provide a useful tool to the observer: the appearance of these features in an activity should herald creativity in process. This model, however, focuses upon the process at the level of the individual, whereas as the overwhelming message of the literature thus far is that the process of creativity entails a complex interaction with the conditions in which the individual finds themselves. In her later research, Craft (2008) becomes less concerned with identifying creativity in itself, preferring to focus on the pedagogic angle concerning practice that fosters creativity. Those original features metamorphose into six 'core features of learners' and teachers' engagement' that include:

- ***Posing questions***: both those spoken aloud and those implicit in the children's actions, questions modelled and celebrated by adults.
- ***Play***: extended opportunities for play, to develop and combine ideas and the opportunity to revisit earlier interests.
- ***Immersion***: the children are immersed in a loving environment; in a caring supportive space for free expression of ideas.
- ***Innovation***: children make strong and playful connections between ideas; the adults support and develop this process.
- ***Being Imaginative***: both imagining and being imaginative take place extensively.
- ***Self-determination and Risk-taking***: children are encouraged to become deeply involved in activities; they are enabled to take risks in an environment that helps support this and are expected to exercise their right to make decisions.

(Adapted from: Cremin et al., 2006 in Craft, 2008).

These six features provide a workable, concise checklist for a researcher wishing to establish the extent to which creativity is being fostered in practice. Though the reliance on observance of these features is necessarily at the mercy of the researcher's ability to recognise them, the emphasis in seeking the presence of these features that enable the process of creativity, as



opposed to trying to discern whether creativity is occurring, removes some of the burdens of subjectivity and the influences of cultural or social dispositions upon that judgement.

If perception of creativity is so clouded by subjectivity, as evidenced by descriptions provided by the various theorists above such as 'effective surprise' (Bruner, 1962) and 'original and of value' (Robinson, 2001), it would appear to be safer to describe an activity as having creative characteristics rather than identifying it as being 'creativity' in itself. An example might be that when painting a picture, a range of faculties and skills are required to construct that image. Some of these, such as the mixing of colour, could be described as very uncreative as a set formula must be followed to produce a certain shade, and the type of image that is chosen, whether a still-life or an abstract representation, will require differing degrees of creative-type skills such as imagination or originality – like Ruskin's (1843-1870) different types of poets. Creativity seems to be the synthesis of a range of skills and processes, the outcome of which is somehow different to those which have gone before: so rather than a skill that can be learned or a talent that is innate, it could be viewed as a trait that is latent in all of us, which, like discipline or critical thinking, may be nurtured and developed. This section may not have been able to provide one over-riding definition of creativity to use, but it has shown that it is possible to identify its role and to measure its presence and involvement by establishing whether certain behaviours are being displayed: helping the practitioner or the researcher identify whether it is being fostered.

### **Why does creativity matter in early years education today?**

In trying to establish what creativity is, this chapter has explored a range of sources that have articulated their own views on why creativity is important. From its implications for future economic success, its central role in being human, its effect on mental health and social well-being; the ascribed connections are numerous. The preceding section of this chapter was concerned with trying to conceptualise creativity in general, cultural terms, but in order to complete the scene-setting for this particular narrative of inquiry it is essential to look at the immediate context of the investigation. This section will therefore be focusing on the question of why creativity matters, particularly in early years education. This question appears to have a two-fold nature. Firstly: what is the benefit to children and, by extension, society in dedicating curriculum space and professional input into fostering creativity? The second aspect is: if or why particularly it should be the role of early years settings to undertake this task. As has been noted repeatedly in this chapter, there continue to be differences in opinion around these issues. Some of these differences, like the 'myths' identified by Bruce (2011), may be the result

of misunderstandings or lack of information, but other standpoints have certainly arisen through ideologies both personal and political. This section will take into account a range of these views; however, ultimately it is the perspectives that have arisen from quality research that this section is most concerned with.

Addressing the first aspect, it is interesting to consider Carr's (1980) gap between theory and practice. Though Carr (1980) wished to highlight a particular issue with teachers' practice not reflecting the findings from cutting-edge research, one could argue that this gap extends more generally to policy and general perceptions about creativity, which may also diverge from the research. Writers, theorists and researchers have long recognised the importance of creativity (or conceptually similar ideas) for developing society as a whole. While mythology dressed the creative urge in the clothing of gods and goddesses such as the beautiful and inspiring Muses of Ancient Greek beliefs (Berens, 1894), it could be inferred that this occurred because they felt it to be important. This inference would appear to be upheld by early philosophers such as Plato's (428/427-348/347 BC in Plato & Jowett, 2010) assertion of the nobility of creative thought and its central role in building a fair and just society. This view may have been formed in ancient times, but it still resonates with modern thinking as evidenced by the range of reports and policies circulating at the present (e.g.: NACCCE, 1999; European Commission, 2010). Creativity has certainly been accepted as a necessary thread in many types of mortal venture by most modern theorists (e.g. Robinson, 2009; Gardner, 2006; Craft, 2008) which justifies its recognition in policy as a vital attribute to nurture in society, but the gap between what is desirable and what actually happens is a persistent feature of the role of creativity in culture.

Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1762) was considerably disillusioned by the culture and society he found around him. Not only did he find its practices distasteful, if not downright detrimental to the healthy development of young children, but his motivation for educating Emile according to his particular method was not simply to return the child to some romantic notion of childhood, but that the child might grow up to become a better man. This is not to say that creativity may not be harnessed for bad: Michael Rosen indicates that certain regimes have employed horribly creative approaches to the extermination of their opponents (in Tims, 2010), but creativity itself is what you make of it. Of course, better men make for a better society, and if, as Plato (428/427-348/347 BC in Plato & Jowett, 2010) contends, creativity is essential for society, it would seem logical to begin to cultivate this trait early on. Rousseau (1762) did not view this as an especially difficult task, as he found the imaginative faculty was

one of the first to develop in children, for him the difficulty lay in preventing it from being stunted by the world outside, the world which it could go on to change.

Of course, the preceding section also showed that creativity in itself does not necessarily make for good people (Gino & Ariely, 2011), but it can certainly enable all types of people to become effective and productive, which benefits everyone. Duffy (2006) particularly makes the case for promoting visual literacy through the medium of creativity, arguing that it is essential for us if we are to be able to develop our living environments in a pleasing way. Interestingly, visual literacy is something that Kress (2003), amongst others, argues is becoming progressively more important as we move to an increasingly screen-based culture. From Rousseau (1762) to Robinson (2001) the message from the supporting voices is that cultivating creativity in young children is essential for the health of a society, whether that means simply learning how to live better, or being able to adapt to change and innovate sufficiently to compete in the global market.

This motivation, however, does not sit well with all participants in the educative process. There is, for example, quite a large issue about what education is for at the centre of the matter. Ken Robinson (2001) may decry the cog-in-the-machine system that schooling has come to represent, yet many of the strongest, or perhaps most popular arguments advocating the cultivation of creativity in young children tend to return to the economic or social discourse. It may be true that humans are social animals and that none of us is an island, but what about the individual? Should more value be placed on the greater good, or should the parts and the whole be valued equally on the basis that one cannot exist without the other? Then there is the notion that childhood is a preparatory state for adulthood: are children really just human 'becomings' (Qvortrup, 1994) or is there not an argument for valuing childhood for itself, not for what it may go on to do? Selling creativity as an economic magic bullet may help to raise its profile amongst those who hold the purse-strings, but for most educators and the children who pass through their hands, it is the experience each child receives that matters most. Indeed, education policy in both England and Catalonia is very clear that it is the duty of the practitioners to meet the needs of the individuals (Departament d'Educació, 2008; Departament d'Educació, 2010; DfE, 2012a). To avoid Carr's (1980) gap, it needs to be clear what the benefits of a creative agenda are to both the professionals involved and to the families of the children who will support the practice.

Beginning with the psychological impacts, it has already been highlighted that creativity is viewed by many as essential both in terms of maintaining psychological health, but also as a

means to treat disorders or traumatic experiences because it enables emotional expression and helps to order experiences (e.g. Winnicott, 1971; Neihart, 1998), which is of particular benefit to younger children who may lack more conventional means of doing so through language. Psychological health may be viewed as a desirable outcome in itself, but it also has a profound effect on educational attainment and, as a consequence, future life chances. Such a holistic perspective may be identified as having its roots in Gestalt theory, where the processes of the mind and brain are all parts of the unified whole (Bruner, 2004) and is reflected in the work of Abraham Maslow (1968) and his Hierarchy of Needs, whereby if conditions for self-esteem, confidence and general equanimity are not met, the individual finds it very hard to operate at their optimum level.

Though social and emotional development is likely to vary in accordance with cultural differences in child-rearing practices, it is generally recognised that educational attainment is dependent upon psychological factors such as self-esteem, which influences how well children are able to make decisions and meet new challenges (Browne, 2008). As a result, observing for well-being in educational settings is often used as an indicator of effective practice: Ferre Laevers (2005) and his team in Belgium produced a scale to measure it, which many settings across the world use to assess their own practice, and Ofsted's Early Years inspectors must observe for happiness and well-being as part of the evidence that helps them to form their judgements (Ofsted, 2013). Maslow's (1968) theory suggests that creativity, as a higher order skill, is not able to take place until all the needs of the individual are met, but the work of Bruner (1962) and Winnicott (1971) suggest that creative expression is a need in itself that must be met to allow us to realize our full potential. This being the case, there is a strong argument for cultivating creativity in order to secure educational attainment through promoting psychological and emotional health.

This is not the only way in which creativity is held to impact on educational attainment, it is suggested that the creative process itself has a powerful effect on thinking abilities. Bruner (1962) said that creativity helps us intellectually because making external representations of thoughts, feelings or experiences allows us to develop our understandings of them. This view reflects Descartes (1637 & 1644) classification of the imagination as one of the two forms of perception and suggests that suppression of this trait runs the risk of depriving the individual of true comprehension of their world. Creativity is helpful in the learning process for children as representation provides them with a means to preserve their experiences and explore them in an abstract way, even – in the case of role-play for example – allowing them to share them

with others (Duffy, 2006), perhaps receiving valuable input from other's perspectives. Role-play and particularly the act of 'worldplay' where children invent paracosms or worlds of their own creation is held to function as a 'learning laboratory' for children and is in turn associated with adult creativity and success (Root-Bernstein, 2009). The role of creativity in perception as a sense-maker offers support to those who would argue for creativity as a means to adapt well to changes. It is a central argument of the Demos economic discourse that creativity is the means by which we may best adapt to a changing social and economic landscape (e.g. Tims, 2010): logically, we have to make sense of these changes before we can acclimatize to them. Yet at an individual level, creativity appears to offer the child an important tool for learning, allowing them to access their true capabilities.

In terms of attainment, Bruner (1962) also suggested that creativity is important socially because it encourages engagement with work, which raises productivity. For children, this translates to the classroom: educational research is full of examples of children who demonstrate markedly less enthusiasm for participating in activities that are overly-restrictive e.g. art activities that are confined to adult notions of end product such as the production of cotton-wool lambs (Duffy, 2006). Interestingly, particularly in regard to the questions around gender and creativity, it is acknowledged that there is an apparent 'boy crisis' in education across the OECD countries, which is connected to engagement in learning (Cappon, 2011). Yet though Bruner (1962) showed how creativity may be harnessed for the greater good, he also reminded his readers of the importance of 'flying kites': of fun in creativity, something which children would possibly value more than anything else.

Fun, beauty and pleasure are aspects of creativity that may be overlooked in justifying creativity, yet Duffy (2006) argues that desire and pleasure in the act of creation date back to those early creation myths and the evidence of stories, songs, paintings and all kinds of ornaments that have marked human culture since pre-history display a deep need to represent and share our experiences with the rest of our species. We love to create and to respond to creativity, beauty touches us deeply and it has been eloquently argued by Joe Winston (2008) that making the educational experience beautiful can completely reenergise it for all its participants because it inspires, fascinates and provokes desire to attain it. Creativity in the classroom can lift the whole experience from the level of learning alone to one of aesthetic pleasure and joy in creation, whilst almost coincidentally deepening the learning that takes place.

The same voices that champion creativity point to the need for this process to begin early. Some of these voices take a more explicitly 'children as becomings' perspective; where cultivating creativity in the early years is viewed as essential preparation for the next level i.e. formal schooling (see DfE, 2012a). Some contemporary contributors to this view draw on longitudinal studies that show the effectiveness of early intervention such as The HighScope Perry Preschool Study Through Age 40 (2005 in Tims, 2010) in mitigating later problems. Though such studies have not particularly focused on fostering creativity, rather on 'quality' pre-school care and education, the message that is being extrapolated from these studies is that if early years education has a strong bearing on an individual's life course and it is desirable to foster creativity, it needs to begin in the early years. This will ensure that the foundations are laid for future development and attempt to pre-empt any inhibiting social factors. The other side of the pro-creativity position prefers to see creativity as enabling young children in their present context, whether that be through facilitating communication and expression, enhancing learning and engagement or providing sheer enjoyment in their experiences (Duffy, 2006). Whether the position taken is child-centric or future-orientated, the onus is placed on early years settings, more so than any other education setting to embed creativity in early learning.

The difficulty for early years settings in fostering creativity is that while it is recognised, and even legislated, that it is part of their duty, there are several complicating factors in this process. Looking at the two early years curriculums that this study is comparing, we find that the EYFS (DfE, 2012a) separates out 'Expressive Arts & Design' into a 'specific area of learning and development', whereas the Catalan equivalent concedes that those same 'arts' are an integral part of communication, and as such, central to children's education (Departament d'Educació, 2008; Departament d'Educació, 2010). While the ancient Greeks had a wider view of what could be considered an art, more recent thinking is reflected in the Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage (DfE, 2012a), which refers to 'Expressive arts and design' including the categories of 'art, music, movement, dance, role-play, and design and technology'. These same categories are what many modern sources would class as creative activities – in fact the preceding version of the Early Years Foundation Stage classified them exactly in this way (Department for Children, Schools and Families, 2008).

The danger with identifying specifically creative activities as opposed to embedding them in the wider curriculum, as the Catalans have done, is that creativity becomes marginalised and not viewed as important as literacy or numeracy, for example. The latest EYFS (DfE, 2012a)

attempts to address this by identifying 'creating and thinking critically' as a 'characteristic of effective teaching and learning' yet without an explicit connection to the other areas, it is doubtful that this message will be clearly received by all early years practitioners in this country. This is a particular consideration owing to the wide variance in levels of education attained by the workforce in the UK as a whole: data from 2011 showed that 63% of all staff in this country were qualified to level 3 or under, with only 11% holding a degree (Brind et al., 2012). This is in marked contrast to Catalonia where all preschool classes from the age of three are led by a teacher (Departament d'Educació, 2008).

The difficulties in interpreting what is meant by creativity in the curriculum are compounded by issues around how much support needs to be contributed to the creative process: do practitioners need to simply set the child free or does there need to be a strong foundation in place? Ruskin (1843-1870) was somewhat contradictory about this issue as he felt that strength and discipline were absolutely essential in order to harness creativity, but at the same time he felt that a degree of freedom was necessary to realise creative potential and cautioned against too strict a framework for fear of stifling it. Yet at the other end of the spectrum, a laissez-faire approach is considered insufficient to maximise creative potential according to the NACCCE (1999) report which considers creativity to be: 'Imaginative activity fashioned so as to produce outcomes that are both original and of value'. Synthesising these two positions, intervention and cultivation, it seems possible that creativity must be cultivated with optimal conditions and freedom to develop, but for it to be of value to society beyond the individual, certain interventions are necessary to train and shape it.

Freud (1899) was also of the opinion that the key to creativity was intellectual freedom, yet achieving freedom may not in itself be as easy as might be assumed. Consider the barriers to creativity that Woolf (1929) identified, for example. It may not be in the power of the individual to remove these intellectual barriers if one is socially disadvantaged in some way, perhaps by gender, race or class. So, if educators seek to liberate their students' creativity, they must consider how they can help remove these impediments. Increasingly, fostering creativity in the early years appears to be taking on a moral character: creativity may be essential in terms of promoting good psychological health and opportunity for attainment, but addressing creativity also means addressing equality too.

There are, however, dissenting voices regarding the importance of creativity in education. B.F. Skinner (1984) was one such voice, evincing horror at 'the rising tide of mediocrity' he felt was sweeping through American schools at the time. One particular article, 'The Shame of

American Education' (Skinner, 1984), was written at a time when Bruner (2004) suggests the hold of behaviourism on American educational psychology was beginning to lose its sway, so it could be read as almost a *cri de cœur* from a fading movement. Skinner (1984) described creativity in education as a 'useless ultimate goal', as creativity is achieved by few people and they require something to be creative with, so it is this 'something' that students must be taught. Gardner (2006), however, defends creativity from this criticism by making a very salient point about creativity and education: education needs to ensure mastery of basic skill sets, which will form a framework upon which to progress creatively, though mastery should not occur at the expense of creativity. For Gardner (2006), though he championed progressive education techniques, there was nothing worse than progressive education done badly as ignoring important basic skills ultimately does children a huge disservice. Interestingly for a researcher so strongly associated with creativity, Gardner (2006) shares with Skinner (1984) a concern that it seemed questionable whether enhancing creativity needed to fall within the remit of schooling at all. Gardner (2006) concluded that it rather depended on whether creativity was a current that ran through the society in question, or whether the schools need to act as a counter-balance to an endemic staidness in society (Gardner, 2006).

Creativity in education is usually addressed from the point of view of the child, but as Bruner (1962) pointed out, creativity engages people better with their work, which implies that a creative early years practitioner will be one who is more engaged and is therefore more effective. Though many of the ideas of Rudolph Steiner in his lecture series 'Kingdom of Childhood' (1924) were too particular for general application to education, he insisted that creativity was an essential trait for teachers to possess in order to best adapt to the children in their care. The creativity of practitioners can often be overlooked in educational discourses, though over recent years certain developments in training the early years workforce have taken place that recognise its importance. One such example is the soon-to-be-superseded Early Years Professional Status, which encouraged practitioners to develop their own creative thinking in order to enhance their problem-solving abilities but also to act as a model for the children in their care (Children's Workforce Development Council (CWDC), 2008). It is not enough for an early years practitioner to be educated sufficiently to understand the concepts behind creativity, they must also be prepared to enact them in their day-to-day practice in order for the benefits to be felt, by themselves as well as by the children. If this is the case, it will be interesting to explore how achievable this is for practitioners, who after all are members of the same society that has propagated so many myths regarding creativity and its properties.



The story of creativity in the world today appears to have become inextricably intertwined with that of early years education: goals such as attainment, well-being, equality and engagement have been shown to be both conditions and consequences of creativity. To remove creativity from the equation is to diminish learning and development; to cultivate it is to allow children to flourish while simultaneously granting them and perhaps their teachers too, the space to fly a kite should they so wish.

### **A finale of sorts.**

The survey of the subject of creativity undertaken in this chapter shows creativity to have been a human concern for as long as we were able to record it and a matter of particular interest in present discourse. Perceptions of creativity and its role within human history and human future have suffered from its early associations with the 'other' whether divinity, talent or madness. As ideas about the nature of creativity have differed widely, it could be argued that this 'otherliness' may stem from a failure for so long to understand it fully. This failure is possibly a consequence of the fact that there is a fair degree of mutability to its nature: it may manifest itself in so many different ways (Plato & Jowett, 2010; Robinson, 2009; Gardner, 2006; Craft, 2008). Definitions of creativity have varied over time, even from theorist to theorist and from culture to culture, and seemingly contrary perspectives may exist simultaneously. In spite of the variances in interpretation, concepts of creativity through the ages appear to have several characteristics in common: it is closely related to the ability to adapt to new situations and is the agent behind all types of successful human endeavour, whether art or science or all the realms in between. All the contributors that have been explored in this particular expedition through the back-story of this investigation agree that its manifestation is both the product of and is conducive to healthy, balanced individuals and societies and that it represents the realisation of full potential, whether for children existing in the present or as part of a grander social and economic narrative.

Acknowledging the range of factors, whether at a personal or a societal level, which may impede the realization of creativity in young children, has meant that this study has had to take a more holistic view of the phenomenon in order to understand it more fully. As a result of this, it seeks to answer the following questions:

- What are the two national cultural perspectives regarding creativity in education?
- What are the prevailing policy approaches to early years education and creativity in each country?

- How do these cultural and policy approaches translate to impact on the fostering of creativity in the early years setting?
- What degrees of difference are there in the actual fostering of creativity in early years settings between the two countries?

These questions address multiple layers of impacts on the fostering of creativity, the following chapter will further examine why and how they were explored.

### Chapter 3 – Unfolding the Story: a Methodology.



A methodology is framed as being the rationale for a particular approach to inquiry, taking in ontological and epistemological perspectives on what research is and also the choice of tools and execution of the study (Hammond & Wellington, 2012). As such, a methodology could be viewed as the application of external philosophical and scientific frameworks upon the internal thought processes of the researcher. This interplay between the particular and the general, the individual and the universal, the characters in their story-settings, is a dominant theme of this study that will be explored in depth in this chapter. In doing so, this chapter will explore how this study has elected to answer the research questions generated from the review of the literature and the theories it has drawn upon to do so.

Perhaps unusually, the methodology for this project might be considered a hybrid: using a narrative structure but also taking a comparative approach. Such a *modus operandi* was developed in response to the research questions, which required a holistic exploration of the phenomenon of the cultivation of creativity within a national system whilst comparing said phenomenon across two different countries. This is a pragmatic application of methodology in that it focuses on providing an appropriate approach for the problem as opposed to

committing to a pre-existing idea (see Hammond & Wellington, 2012). Contemporary writers of research literature try to discourage 'methodolatry', advocating instead the application of approaches that are suited to the task and honest about their character, particularly as disparities between methods described and methods carried out may occur in trying to fit the project to the methodology too slavishly (Bazeley, 2013). It is hoped that this chapter will illustrate how the methodology supports the aims of the project.

In order to demonstrate this as clearly as possible, this chapter will explore the two aspects of the hybrid approach - narrative and comparative - looking at the justifications and implications for each one. It will then provide a rationale for the choice of methods that were used within these frameworks and describe the strategies for analysis of each data source as well as a plan for analysis of the whole project. The chapter will end by exploring the ethical considerations that were raised throughout the planning stage of this project.

### **The Structure – a narrative approach to educational research.**

Choosing a methodological approach that could handle the remit of the research questions proved to be quite a serious challenge. The focus of the research questions that were generated from the Literature Review was broad in scope, inquiring into not only the experience of the individual, but also the wider contexts in which they were located. Dealing with this breadth of scope required an approach that could consider all the identified areas simultaneously and evenly. Traditional perspectives on research define two paradigms, positivism and interpretivism, usually treating them as diametrically opposed in character (Robson, 1993). Though proponents of each approach have historically questioned the 'truth' of each other's findings, current thinking suggests that the dichotomy between the two is artificial, that a combination of both is required in order to establish what a phenomenon is and how it works (Hartas, 2010b). Roberts-Holmes (2005) uses the analogy of photography, describing a positivist approach as the wide-angle or panorama and interpretivism as the close-up: this shows us that these qualities might be different, but they may also be complementary in nature. In order to address the full scale of the research questions, a different philosophy is called for: one which can incorporate the over-arching broad-brush approach with an appreciation of the fine detail.

This breadth of scope is a reflection of an important tenet of education research: the treatment of the child both as a whole being, rather than the sum of its parts, and also as part of a wider whole: society. Such an approach can be traced back to the work of Friedrich

Froebel and his ideas about both the unity of the individual and its unity with the rest of the universe (Froebel, 1886). For Froebel (1886) it was necessary for the educator to understand this, how the development of the child is influenced by the actions of the generation before them and by the world around them, the educator must: '... make the individual and particular general; he must make the general individual and particular, and prove the existence of both.' (Froebel, 1886: p10). One of Froebel's contemporaries, John Dewey (1897), also favoured this view, describing education as the participation of the child in the social consciousness.

Since that time, research undertaken around children and their education such as Urie Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological model of a child's development and latter-day attempts to 'join-up' children's services in England (HM Government, 2013) recognise the inter-connectedness of all aspects of a child's life and the potential for domino-like effects where an event in one area causes a reaction in another e.g. problems at home translating into issues with academic attainment. For these reasons, this study has tried to look at the wider picture of the child's experience in order to understand how creativity is being fostered. If creativity is, as Froebel (1886) suggested, a human (or the human) attribute and not a simply a learned technique or a skill, then, like any other attribute such as sociability, its development and manifestation may be influenced by a range of factors from individual predisposition, modelled behaviour and physical circumstances, amongst others.

This study, through examining the literature, has raised questions regarding the experience of the individual children within each setting up through to policy decisions at a national level, as well as the interactions between these two poles. The preceding paragraph referenced the work of Urie Bronfenbrenner (1979) into children's development in the context of their environment and it would appear that the focus of this investigation mirrors the structure of Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological model of development, where each layer of social system surrounding the individual, from the immediate to the far removed, has an impact on how that individual develops. The following diagram illustrates how these layers interact.

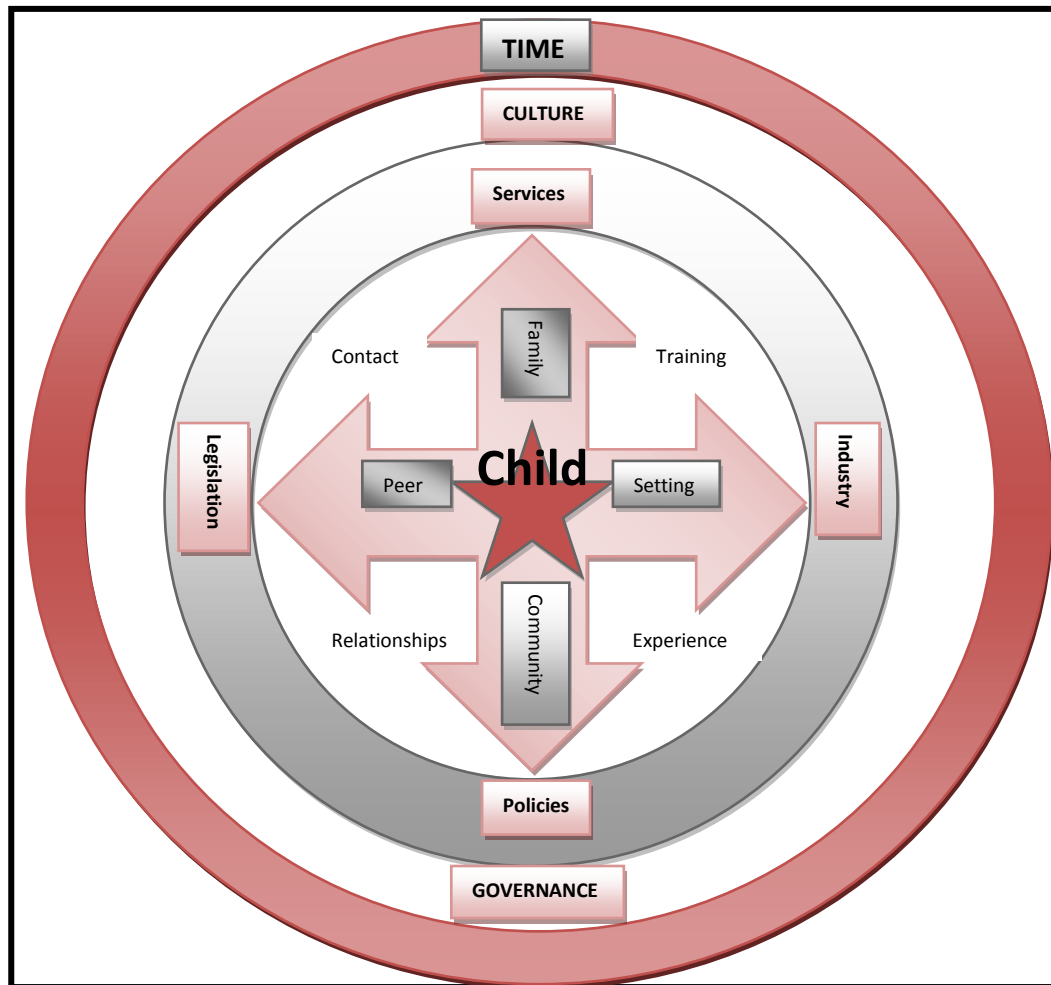


Figure 2 - Adapted from Bronfenbrenner (1979).

This model is meant to illustrate the effects of context on a child's overall development, but it could be adapted to look at a more specific effect: namely how context can foster the creative development of a child. At the centre of Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecosystem is the individual, surrounded by the microsystem or the circle of immediate influences upon them. The microsystem of interest for this project is the child's educational setting and the practitioners within it. This is encircled by the mesosystem, consisting of the links between the immediate environment and the wider world, which in this study would be the training and experience of those practitioners. Beyond this is the exosystem, which affects the individual through educational policy, legislation and even industry reports on the value of creativity (e.g. IBM Institute for Business Value, 2012). Further away still is the macrosystem, or the prevailing cultural and political backdrop in which the individual lives: recent history shows how crisis can precipitate a change in government whose ideology may impact on education policy. The ecosystem is embedded in the chronosystem, the moment in time in which the individual finds themselves: the literature explored in the previous chapter showed that attitudes towards

creativity can change over time. The boundaries between these layers are not clearly defined and there are overlaps, but to ignore one of these layers would be to present an incomplete or even distorted picture. There are well-documented implications of a range of factors on creative development and expression, including adult interaction and cultural practices (Bruce, 2011; Gardner, 2006). It is the contention of this study that you cannot separate these factors out; they are part of a whole, multi-layered picture: elements of a story.

The proposition of using a model of interconnectivity to understand phenomena can also be found in other areas of science. One such example is Gaia theory - as advanced by the chemist and environmentalist James Lovelock (1979). His view of Earth envisions every living thing on the planet as interlinked; each individual entity is inextricably part of, and embedded within, the über-organism, Gaia, each one affecting the whole, not necessarily as a consequence of direct action but by the simple reality of co-existence in a self-regulating system (Lovelock, 1979). There are certain microbes, the tiniest life form available on Earth, which have been shown to affect our climate, causing thermal updrafts, forming clouds and producing rain – even storms and monsoons (Hamilton & Lenton, 1998). This example is relevant to this study because it illustrates the law of unintended consequences acting within an ecological system: the effect was likely a by-product of chemical production to protect from ice-damage, though it has the benefit of enabling the microbes to disperse themselves (Hamilton & Lenton, 1998).

So, if we were to apply an ecological lens such as Lovelock's (1979) to unintended effects around creative expression in education, the story might unfold as follows: a practitioner evolves a disjuncture from creative expression as a result of cultural beliefs linking it to talent. She believes herself, therefore to 'not be a creative person'. The curriculum demands that she engender creativity in young children and she believes it to be beneficial for them, yet she unconsciously models awkwardness about creative expression and may even reproduce those cultural beliefs by rewarding manifestations of 'talent' such as drawing or painting, not recognising creative thought. Thus the child's creative development is moulded by culture and by the past, despite the conscious intentions of the practitioner. Just as Lovelock (1979) describes the biosphere as being so much more than the sum of its parts, this investigation aims to create a coherent narrative of how children's creativity is being fostered in Catalonia and England from the disparate elements within each national system.

Educational research today is seen as transdisciplinary and necessarily engaged in capturing complexity: the links between education and learning, present practice and future society (Hartas, 2010a). Such complexities can mean that taking a single-track approach to research,

quantitative or qualitative, may capture phenomena accurately yet without taking into account their context: a case study can illustrate practice in a setting, but may not tell you about the socio-cultural conditions that formed it; league tables can measure exam performance, but not how it has been achieved. It has therefore been argued that for educational research to become more relevant, artificial divides between methodological paradigms should be ignored (Hartas, 2010a) and many contemporary researchers advocate the use of mixed methods in order to strike a balance between breadth and depth of understanding (Schneider, 2007). Narrative methodology is such an approach as it has no specific method attached to it; rather it may employ a range of techniques from across the disciplines (Webster & Mertova, 2007). It is not, however, a particularly well-known one: finding out about narrative approaches was serendipitous: as a non-traditional approach it had not really appeared on my radar until I attended a series of talks by postgraduates on their research projects, one of which mentioned using narrative techniques with patients<sup>1</sup>.

In a project focusing on creativity, the idea of using stories had an undeniable attraction. Investigating further, its scope had real potential for the aims of this project: narrative methodology is an approach to inquiry that can use a mix of methods from either side of the paradigm divide in order to facilitate understanding of complex social phenomena such as education: it has been described as a 'cohering mechanism' for weaving together social context and individual experience (Erben, 1998: 13). Here was an approach that could run the scale from macro to micro in order to create a whole account. The term 'narrative' forms the bedrock of the methodology behind this project. Using the analogy of an unfolding story (where the characters, settings and context all have a part to play) provides a useful model of how best to present the web of different strands highlighted by the research questions. Barthes (1988), the literary theorist, says that within a narrative, everything signifies to a degree: the actions of the protagonists, the objects they find, the settings they appear in, which reflects the aim of this study to give credence to both the individual and the general. Placing the differing elements of the study within a narrative framework could help put them in perspective and enable understanding of their roles.

The narrative form has been irrevocably entwined with human culture and understanding since the beginning of history, it is a natural human impulse and a form that is present in every mode of human representation (Barthes, 1988; Sandelowski, 1991). Narrative structure is

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<sup>1</sup> Sadly, my notes for this event were mislaid so I am unable to provide any further information on this particular talk.



therefore the structure of how we think and process information and should offer both the researcher and the reader a coherent account of the situation. If you have ever worked with young children, you are aware of the prevalence of narrative in their play and its power to, according to one story-teller 'Nettlefoot Kate', focus attention and to address a range of complex issues in a simple way (Heinemeyer, 2013). In terms of its application to research, its particularly human nature is said to help reveal and find solutions for problems which may be overlooked by more traditional approaches and draw attention to what lies in front of us (Sandelowski, 1991). The universality of the narrative form will not only assist this project in making meaning from the areas of study, but will also provide a means to convey the findings in an accessible structure.

In order to quite literally illustrate this, this study has developed a visual allusion to an old fairy-tale. Part of the impetus for this project is a personal belief in the importance of creativity; therefore it seemed important to try to capture some of the research project in a creative way – perhaps this could even be of some benefit to the overall project. As explored in the previous chapter, Joe Winston (2009) writes on the role of beauty in education and offers the intriguing assertion that while latterly the concept of beauty is usually considered to be an irrelevance or even a hindrance to our present conceptions of education, traditionally it has always occupied a central position. Plato (Plato & Jowett, 2010) for example, returns repeatedly to the concept of beauty: he wrote of beauty as having the power to improve us as beauty causes us to aspire to beauty. Winston (2009) explores such classical views alongside more modern theories and contends that rather than being a distraction from serious education, beauty in itself can provide the teacher with a framework to enable the expression of the true values of their educational practice. In line with this, Bruner (1962) saw creative expression as how the human being reaches excellence. Drawing on my own experiences, I can imagine that if the teacher tries to take a creative approach towards lesson planning and then applies the ideal of beauty to this process too, the lesson should hopefully be highly pleasing to teacher and student, deepening engagement for both parties.

If such an effect might be perceived in the education process, there would seem to be an argument for beauty and creativity in research too. Firstly, Bazeley (2013) remarks that alongside sharp observation and clear thinking, 'a strong dash' of creativity has long been an important feature of qualitative data analysis owing to the complexity of the data that is often gathered. Thus a creative approach might in fact be necessary here to deal with the range of data that the research questions are interested in. Secondly, regarding the place of aesthetics

in this process, Plato (Plato & Jowett, 2010) describes beauty as either offering pleasure or utility. In choosing to illustrate my thesis with colour plates it is hoped that both of his ends might be achieved: the images have been created with the aim of providing a visual representation of the scope of the project as an aid to the reader, yet by producing them in the most aesthetically pleasing manner I am able to it is hoped to engage the reader and indeed my own sense of pleasure in presentation. The following diagram uses said illustrations, created from the traditional tale 'Little Red Riding Hood' and melded with the aforementioned ecological model of development (Bronfenbrenner, 1979), in order to give an idea of the shape and structure of this research project.



Figure 3 - Narrative Methodology of the Story and its Elements.

This diagram encapsulates the importance of capturing the whole story: we can see that by subtracting just one of the elements, or altering it in some way, the story would change considerably and be unrecognisable as the version of Little Red Riding Hood that we have heard so many times. Without the historical setting, the sparsely populated, forested land becomes unlikely; without the forest, the likelihood of wolves and woodcutters decreases; without wolves, woodcutters and grandmothers, events would take a different turn; without paths, how can these settings connect; and without a village or family, Red Riding Hood would be a different person and maybe never sent on her journey at all. By extension, with reference to the ecological model of development (Bronfenbrenner, 1979), in looking at the 'story' of early childhood education in England or Catalonia, to miss out one of these elements gives an incomplete picture: without understanding the politics, how can we understand the shape of the curriculum? As a result, this study has tried to address all of the areas laid out in the diagram above, from the historical context down to the individual child's experiences.

Beyond providing a broad and coherent structure, the primacy of the narrative form to meaning-making and understanding manifests in several ways that are beneficial to the study of social, and in this case educational, phenomena. Ann-Marie Bathmaker (2010) regards narrative research as being particularly good at illuminating 'what troubles us' with regard to educational research (Bathmaker 2010: 1). It is hoped that the study's methods will allow this to surface as the participants describe or demonstrate their experiences: how do children and practitioners really feel about the early years education systems that they form a part of? Bathmaker (2010) also suggests that narrative research may be of particular relevance at this moment in history, citing a prevalence of personal narratives in present-day Western culture and politics. This could well be the case, taking into consideration the rise of reality television and photographs of politicians *en famille*, but it could be argued that such interests in the personal lives of people have always existed, certainly around such diverse figures as Lord Byron and Marie Antoinette. However, interest has certainly shifted from the minutia of the lives of the rich and famous to creation of a new rich and famous from people who have only the minutia of their lives to contribute. Perhaps it is simply that, as Barthes (1988) and so many others have pointed out, as a species we are interested in stories, though time and society may have an impact on the protagonists that we choose.

Regarding the personal quality of this approach, narrative inquiry can also be highly concerned with giving voice to the individual. Hammond & Wellington (2012) affirm that narrative research may be both emic and etic in intent: that is that it may consider either experiences

from within the system or observations from the outside - or indeed may combine the two viewpoints. Clough (2002) used narrative methodology extensively in his endeavours to represent his research, though his stories go further towards mimicking literary art forms than this study intends to (he uses fictionalisation to explore some of his data), he also describes the virtues of the form as being able to 'turn up the volume' on voices that may otherwise not be heard (Clough, 2002: 67). This quality is important to this study for reasons of both ideology and veracity. Sikes & Nixon (2003) say that educational research is epistemologically grounded in the moral foundations of educational practice; it is not simply *about* education, but should have an educational quality in itself – methods are not simply a means to an end. Clark & Moss (2001), who developed the Mosaic Approach for listening to young children state that using a participatory approach for collecting data from young children is not simply about collecting their perspectives, but about respecting their rights to expression on the subject of their lives, particularly by amplifying those voices that may be muffled by social or developmental barriers.

Regardless of the pull of the personal or moral significance, there are strong reasons to listen to children's voices in order to enhance the veracity of the project. If the validity of a study is dependent upon whether data reflect what they claim to (Robson, 1993), it is necessary, as highlighted earlier by Bazeley (2013) to ensure that the methodology is appropriate for the job. Clark & Moss (2001) quote Langsted's (1994 in Clark & Moss, 2001) contention that the child is an expert in their own life: as this study is interested in how children's creativity is fostered by the educational systems in which they are located, it needs to find out from the children themselves how that is happening. This is particularly important if, as noted in the previous chapter, perceptions of creativity are subjective. Thus the qualities of narrative methodology established so far regarding giving voice to the individual, particularly those with less authority (Clough, 2002), may be functional as well as ethical.

Though still quite new, there is much literature on the benefits of using narrative methods of inquiry in the social sciences. Narrative approaches are identified with the post-modern paradigm and there is no prescription of methods (Webster & Mertova, 2007), but relative obscurity can mean that interpretations vary. This cloudiness can be problematic when first embarking upon a narrative project: what exactly is it and how should one go about it? Though usually referred to as narrative inquiry, writing on 'biographical research' or 'life history research' (e.g. Erben, 1998; Bathmaker, 2010) explores the same or very similar themes: Hammond & Wellington (2012) describe any differences as being 'of degree'. Webster &

Mertova (2007), like many other advocates of the approach, highlight its power to consider both the universal and the personal and particularly argue that many other research methods can overlook complex issues that may be considered important by the participants. Because narratives do not exist in a vacuum and are shaped by their contexts, such a method of inquiry can be used to capture 'the whole story' (Webster & Mertova, 2007: 3). That is to say that narrative inquiry does not simply focus on what the researcher deems to be important, but should take into account all the contextual factors which knit together to form the whole. If interpretivism is concerned with the close-up, narrative methodology embeds this within the panorama: detail is not lost at the expense of scope, nor is scope ignored in the pursuit of detail.

Narrative research might be considered as a series of these close-ups embedded within the scope of the project. The process of acknowledging these different perspectives is of benefit to the researcher because it allows the project to step outside the confines of what Geertz (1992) refers to as 'local knowledge': not necessarily that confined by geography, but that confined by experience. Geertz (1992) asks whether the hydrologist knows the water better than the swimmer: does the teacher know education better than the child? Weaving these perspectives together should then provide a more rounded reading of what is actually occurring. As a result of this, narrative research has the potential to be long and contain many strands, which could disorientate the reader. Literary theory, however, tells us that a story is made up from action known as the plot, following a plot line or series of events (Culler, 2009). The narrative structure is thus appropriately equipped to organise these threads into a form that the reader can follow.

Plot, however, should not be considered mere sequence; it requires a transformation of some sort (Culler, 2009). In terms of narrative methodology, these transformative moments are known as 'critical events', which usually precipitate a change in worldview or understanding by the protagonist of the narrative (Webster & Mertova, 2007). Once these events have been identified, they can be used to help decode the strategies and processes that are in use by the participant in the present (Webster & Mertova, 2007). This study, using multiple perspectives, has applied the term 'protagonist' flexibly. This has enabled it to investigate the appearance of critical events not only in the narratives of individuals, but also in those of nations, policies and curriculums. It is hoped that this approach will facilitate some understanding as to why dispositions and approaches to creativity in early years education have evolved in the way they currently appear.

So, narrative research has a dual focus: listening to the voices of the individuals as well as making sense of the wider picture: giving equal weight to the private as well as the collective experience and drawing connections between them. Bathmaker (2010) explains that the narratives in the book she co-edited on education and narrative research are used as a way to connect personal concerns with public ones – a story is always ‘set’ just as Red Riding Hood’s story could never be anywhere but in the woods. As such, the aspiration of this study towards an ecological perspective seems to mesh well with the examples of narrative inquiry found in the literature: both give an account of the whole structure within which a phenomenon might take place. In summary, narrative inquiry is about giving voice to the individual as well as understanding their context: the cog as well as the machine. It takes a holistic view of a given phenomenon and takes into account beginnings, middles and ends, protagonists and the scenes within which their stories are set.

### **International comparison – what are the real benefits?**

This research project looks at the narratives of two different approaches to early years education, set in two different countries. As such, its methodology must also take into account comparative approaches to research and their implications. Comparative studies have a long-established place in educational research and texts on effective international models of early years education regularly feature in our literature, policy and practice: witness the strong influence of Scandinavian practice on the development of Forest Schools in the United Kingdom (Knight, 2009). There are many academic publications in existence which explore international perspectives, including *The International Journal of Early Years Education*, which has been in existence for over twenty years. Though such comparative material may have been popular in this country for some long while, influencing practice and even national policy, their greatest benefits may not be the most obvious ones. Half a century ago, Edmund J. King (1962) asked seriously why we should bother comparing education between countries. The following section aims to find an answer to this question and look at the issues such comparisons may raise.

It is accepted that international research can provide comparative perspectives to education in different contexts (e.g. Soler & Miller, 2003), perhaps furnishing material that allows researchers to critique and develop their own systems and share new ideas. Looking at literature on international education systems such as 'Bringing the Reggio Approach to Your Early Years Practice' (Thornton & Brunton, 2010), it could be assumed that studying other approaches primarily enables the cherry-picking of successful ideas for application at home.

King (1962), however, felt that international comparison could contribute more than this. He noted that humans are atrocious at forming an accurate picture of themselves and their actions and that understandings are not discrete flashes, but must be 'built-up' from experiences in different contexts (King, 1962).

Extending his arguments to educational research, King (1962) suggested that the comparison of different approaches to education may help us to better identify persistent issues in education as a whole, including our own practice, whilst extending our knowledge. His emphasis on context cautions against cherry-picking ideas that may not be suited to transfer, a point recognised by more modern early years education researchers such as Bottle (2007). Geertz (1992) affirmed that the search for universals – 'this technique cultivates creativity in all children' - is not a practice that is productive; it is more likely to result in implausible and above all uninformative findings. Consequently, this research project aims not to find a winning approach or transferable techniques, but to try to use comparison as a lens through which to view the effectiveness of practice in each country: to understand what is being done and perhaps glean an idea of what might be done within each system.

Beyond the appreciably small pond of educational research, there are many arguments to be made for the cultivation of international thinking. In *The Republic*, Plato (Plato & Jowett, 2010) makes the point that to create a state where nothing need be imported is almost impossible: this was in reference to physical goods, but the same could be said for ideas too. In constructing the Republic, Socrates and his companions frequently make reference to other states and nations, both in the consequences of their actions, which inform the construction of the Republic, but also their presence and how it affects the Republic itself (Plato & Jowett, 2010). This is to say that nothing exists in a vacuum, everything that is created, even though it is entirely new, is always as a response to what has gone before and is necessarily aware of what is around it. Not to look to other countries whether for ideas, experience, information, signals of our success or security would therefore be not only short-sighted, but anathema to the way in which humans have always developed societies: even those states which profess to hate all others and their ways of life measure their own success against the perceived barbarity or decadence of others.

Yet there is more to the study of other nations than the act of comparison. Michel de Montaigne (1580) considered in his *Essays* that the purpose of visiting foreign lands should not be merely to glean information about the places visited, but that '...we may whet and sharpen our wits by rubbing them against those of others' (Montaigne, 1580: no page number). For

Montaigne (1580), real education had to go beyond the written word and to be experienced directly because within these experiences we may find more than facts and novelty: perchance a form of mental exercise to ultimately better our thinking. The potential for improvement through exposure to other lands and cultures is increasingly recognised today: the International Studies Association (ISA) was founded in 1959; it has non-governmental consultancy status with the United Nations and represents about 80 countries (ISA, 2013). ISA is an interdisciplinary organisation that facilitates communications amongst educators, researchers and practitioners across the globe in the belief that sharing practice and ideas can help bring about scientific, educational and cultural improvements (ISA, 2013). This approach also rejects cherry-picking: rather than one-culture ransacking another for its best bits, this model of comparison is one from which all stakeholders can benefit. In terms of this particular study, the ISA model highlights a need for findings to be shared with all of the settings involved if the true benefits of comparative study are to be realised.

International thinking is also of particular relevance today: not only is the world markedly smaller in terms of accessibility than it ever was for Plato or Montaigne, but it is vastly better connected. A student may sit in a library in England; wearing clothes made in India, typing on a computer from Korea using software developed in the U.S. Around that student are people of every nationality conceivable, the student herself has dual nationality and has lived in several different countries. The international is here around us. The children we teach in our schools are frequently international too: the fieldwork for this study carried out in both countries identified that a significant proportion of the children in the settings studied were either foreign-born or of foreign or mixed heritage. The Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) (Department for Education (DfE, 2012a) makes it clear that as educators we need to accept children's differing backgrounds, to value diversity and support their needs. Comparing international approaches to education can help us to achieve these ends as they can help us not only to critique and improve our own methods (as discussed in the preceding paragraphs), but also provide us with understanding of how things may be done elsewhere, and how those cultures have impacted upon the experiences of those children.

Undertaking international comparisons in educational research poses some interesting questions for the researcher. At the most basic level, there is the issue of language and cultural barriers inhibiting interpretation (Hartas, 2010c), something that may be slightly mitigated in this case by my time spent living in the area and Spanish fluency. Yet while this last quality may make me intelligible to the general public, I must recognise that this project is intending on



performing fieldwork in schools where Catalan, not Spanish, is the preferred language, and while I can read and understand this tolerably well, it is with significantly less ease. Beyond this, there are cross-cultural differences in both education and education research which may cause difficulties (Robinson-Pant, 2005). This project is taking an open minded approach towards potential differences between the educational approaches, their existence or not is to be documented by this project, however the idea that differences could arise in what 'good' research is and what educational research is for was not something that had been considered beforehand. Robinson-Pant (2005) spent a considerable length of time living, working and researching in Nepal, her experience there, along with work with international students back here in Britain has led her to try and explore these gaps in perspective. It will be important for the implementation of this project not only to question what my contacts and participants in Spain will be expecting, but also what assumptions about research execution I may be carrying with me.

Robinson-Pant (2005) also flags up the possibility of ethical conflicts caused by cultural differences: as a researcher we may come into contact with situations which go against the grain of our own beliefs and training. She highlights a potential dilemma for a researcher who may witness a situation they feel the need to intervene in, yet this act may impact upon their work as they move from being a passive observer to becoming another actor in the situation (Robinson-Pant, 2005). Interestingly, both this situation and a conflict in understanding about what a 'good' research project should do occurred in the fieldwork stage of this project, which will be further discussed in the following chapter. Given the complexities of human nature and societies, and indeed the absence of a manual advising an English educational researcher on what they should look out for whilst conducting research in Catalonia, it seems impossible to entirely mitigate such scenarios. The early stages of this study did include some email discussion with the Universitat de Barcelona and the Departament de Educació around what might be expected, which appeared to be very little. This in itself highlighted quite a different attitude to my experiences of educational research so far, however, culture is only part of the story: the situations highlighted in this paragraph may also arise owing to differences in the personal beliefs and values of the observer and observed.

International comparison then is not without its pitfalls; though it could be argued any research project is subject to these. Preparation and honesty about the potential problems can help alleviate some of the issues caused by inter-cultural differences, albeit not completely. Clarity about the aims of international comparison for this study is also important. This

comparison has been undertaken not to champion one approach over another in terms of fostering creativity, or to pinpoint ideas worth borrowing, but to use the comparisons as a lens through which to reflect upon the barriers and the resources for cultivating creativity that exist in each system. In answer to King's (1962) question as to why we should bother comparing educational systems across countries, perhaps the answer is that looking out at the world provides us with the tools that we need to be able to look in at the systems in which we are placed.

## **Methods – teasing out the elements of the story.**

In Erben's (1998) book on biographical methods, he submits that it is necessary to interpret the complexity of an individual's narrative using as wide a range of methods as possible owing to the suggestion that 'man is an animal suspended in webs of significance he himself has spun'(Geertz, 1973 in Erben, 1998: 5). That is to say that the complexity of human constructions such as culture, society or politics and the experiences and perspectives of the individuals within them cannot be unpicked by using any single method alone. In modelling the narrative approach of this study upon an ecosystem, this chapter has shown that data will need to be collected from a range of different sources in order to build up a full picture of the cultivation of creativity in each early years system. Different sources will naturally call for different methods: the full range of which, their implementations, implications and how they were analysed will be explored throughout this section.

Beginning from the outer layer of the ecosystem, the narrative of the historical context of early years education in both countries was explored, investigating the presence of creativity within those systems over time. This was achieved via analysis of a range of documents, from historical accounts and reports to more recent books and articles. Next, the study examined the cultural beliefs and values in each country that might impact upon creativity, using a similar range of documents. This was followed by analysis of policy and politics influencing early years provision, including the statutory frameworks in England and Catalonia regarding education in the early years. As this category varies slightly between the two countries, focus is maintained on the requirements which apply to 3-4 year olds. Regarding how these frameworks are put into practice and how they impact on the fostering of creativity in young children, several methods were implemented in early years settings in each country. The practitioners' views and experiences concerning creativity and education were captured through interviews and the writing of reflective stories. Narrative observations were conducted to see whether the practice is adequate to foster creativity. Finally, this study

endeavoured to capture the children's voice on the matter, using techniques taken from the Mosaic Approach (Clark & Moss, 2001) – a walking tour and map-making - in order to establish whether the children themselves felt able to exercise their creativity.

The first of these methods, documentary analysis, is a method that may traditionally have been overlooked in educational research (Robinson, 2010). Documentary analysis may also be called content analysis, and its applications may range from inferring meaning from the content of the text, to reconstructing a history (Robson, 1993). In fact, this last application may be viewed as one of its greatest assets: documentary analysis can help to firmly contextualise the research, to set the scene for the story as many of its methods are derived from historical methods (Robinson, 2010). This is helpful to a study such as this that seeks to understand not just what the impacts on fostering creativity are, but how they arose. Though an understanding of history in this way may be helpful, history should also be treated with caution. Williams (1983) writes that in early English use the words *history* and *story* were both used interchangeably for narratives of real or imaginary events. This is root is reflected in modern Spanish use, where the one word *historia* may signify both meanings. Henry Ford's declaration that 'History is bunk' has entered the public consciousness to such an extent that it no longer appears to be a quote, more a proverb. It is important to maintain this sense of suspicion towards history, not because it should be dismissed as nonsense or outright fiction – not all historians share Herodotus' love of a tall tale – but because of the process of writing it. History is written by people and people are fallible: to quote another well-known saying 'don't believe everything that you read'.

Within documentary research, there is an occasionally contentious hierarchy applied to the types of documents to be analysed. Primary sources, made close to the time of interest, can be viewed as more important than secondary sources, which are documents made *about* the primary sources (Robinson, 2010). These may well have been written some time later or indeed filtered through the lens of the writer's own values and beliefs. In truth, however, no document can be relied upon for honesty and transparency: it has been written for a reason. As a result, it has been suggested that the premise of documentary research is that no document should be taken at face value (Hammond & Wellington, 2012). Robson (1993) highlights the importance of taking into account both *witting* and *unwitting* evidence from a text; the former being the information that the writer intended to convey, the latter being everything else that can be ascertained. This last category may include clues within the text to the writer's views or experiences such as turns of phrase or styles of writing, or the format the

text appears in such as a newspaper opinion piece or a journal article. There are several approaches that may be used within documentary analysis including: hermeneutics, linguistic analysis, discourse analysis, semiotic analysis, quantitative content analysis and grounded theory (Robinson, 2010).

Documentary analysis was chosen not only for the reasons highlighted above, but also because it is indicated as being complementary to other types of data collection in a mixed-method approach (Robinson, 2010), such as narrative methodology. The affinity between history and narrative suggested that it would suit the outer systems of each educational approach: chronological context, culture and policy development. In order to address the issues around reliability with regard to the 'truthfulness' of texts, this study has endeavoured to triangulate information from historical accounts with policy and official documentation, such as curriculums and their supporting material. These documents have been analysed using grounded theory: though this has traditionally been thought of as a methodology, Cho & Lee (2014) argue that its philosophical basis means that it can work equally well as a method. It is most appropriate for when no theory exists or requires proving and the researcher is aiming to simply explain the phenomenon (Cho & Lee, 2014), thus it seems ideally suited to the process of narrating the context and development of attitudes towards early years education and creativity. The philosophy behind the grounded theory method reflects the pragmatic epistemological basis of this study, as it seeks to explore what is there as opposed to trying to fit the data into a priori categories (see Hammond & Wellington, 2012).

Grounded theory involves data collection and analysis taking place in tandem (Cho & Lee, 2014), meaning that in this study; the processing of one document pointed the way to the next: was further depth required on the subject; what was the next event chronologically? Data for grounded theory should be compared and contrasted and selected in such a way as to provide different perspectives on the phenomena under study (Cho & Lee, 2014). It has not always been possible to look at primary resources, particularly those around the history of early years education owing to time and geographical constraints, though the study has endeavoured to use the work of several writers of secondary sources around each area in order to attempt to mitigate bias in the overall account. The use of this method not only shows how policy and practice have developed, but also the socio-cultural factors in existence that may affect the individuals: how is creativity collectively thought of? Is it viewed as the preserve of the talented? Is it a luxury, a waste of time? Owing to the difficulties highlighted in the previous chapter in pinpointing what creativity is and indeed the fact that it is not always

explicitly identified as an outcome, this method also referred to the core features of learners' and teacher's engagement (Cremin et al., 2006 in Craft, 2008) where necessary in order to identify whether or not creativity was valued by the perspectives explored. These features consist of *Posing Questions, Play, Immersion in a Loving Environment, Innovation, Being Imaginative, Self-determination and Risk-taking*.

Having used documentary analysis to try to set the scene of the narrative, the methods that follow focus upon the characters appearing in the story: the professionals who work directly with children in early years settings and the children themselves. For each group, it was decided to use two different methods and one to look at the interaction between the two. This would hopefully, if not triangulate the data in the truest sense of the word, at least try to corroborate the findings. This decision was taken in light of Robson's (1993) view that multiple methods can help to reduce 'inappropriate certainty' about data that may occur when only one method is used. This is particularly important in a study like this one, which is interested in the whole story around early years education and creativity: an interview may yield one set of data that may be entirely contradicted by the actions of the same participant during an observation. Such an approach is not without its pitfalls: Robson (1993) cautions that the potential for differences in the data may also lead to uncertainty or even confusion. In terms of this project, however, differences (should they occur) might in themselves offer valuable clues about the overall narrative. A possible difference between interview data and observed behaviour should be probed in light of the questions raised in the previous chapter regarding the 'gap between theory and practice' (Carr, 1980).

In trying to establish the effect of varying factors such as history, culture, training, experience and values upon a professional's practice, it is necessary to look at both the witting and unwitting information that they might supply. Thus a person would certainly know what they had learnt about creativity, but owing to their experience of their culture as normal, they might not be conscious of how culture has affected their disposition. The researcher would need to find a way to unlock that unwitting information. Consequently, using a balance of methods that favoured the collection of each type of information would be helpful to the project. In the case of the methods used with the young children, the rationale of using multiple methods would also help to respect the 'hundred languages of children' (Malaguzzi, 1997 in Thornton & Brunton, 2005): the notion that children may communicate in myriad ways, not necessarily connected to their speaking abilities. Differing methods would hopefully widen the ways in which each child would be able to communicate with the researcher. This

idea was also extended to the adults in the study on the basis that they too might find it easier or more comfortable to express themselves using one method rather than another.

With the practitioners, the methods used were face-to-face interviews and writing short, anonymous reflective stories. The interviews, barring some closed questions at the beginning, consisted of questions that allowed the practitioner to tell their own stories regarding early years education and creativity, asking questions about their experience, knowledge and opinions (see Appendix D), which could then be themed and compared against the data from the other methods. Hobson & Townsend (2010) support this intention, pointing out that this method is very useful for covering a wide range of topics at a time and for addressing issues that would not be possible through observation alone. However, they do highlight that it is not a neutral method, it is coloured by the very presence of the researcher who may be considered a 'co-producer' of the data (Hobson & Townsend, 2010). This means that the answers to the questions may have been affected by the participants' reactions to me: they knew at least a little about me and my background, that I am interested in both education and creativity, they may have felt affinity or antipathy towards me, all of which may have controlled how they answered.

To try to mitigate this, and bearing in mind Erben's (1998) statement that capturing the complexity of experience requires a complexity of methods, the second method was developed. This approach sought to capture practitioners' views and experiences about creativity in early years education in a more oblique manner than the interviews, which risked telling me what I wanted to hear. Practitioners were given a sheet of paper with the instruction to write a reflective story about one memorable event, either from their practice or own education, regarding creativity and education in the hope of turning up some of Webster & Mertova's (2007) 'critical incidents'. Such documents have the benefit of being primary documents with clear authenticity, as they will be received directly from the authors (see Robinson, 2010). Interestingly, documentary research cautions greatly against the biases that may be found within documents (Robinson, 2010), yet it is precisely those biases that this method hoped to tease out. As opposed to the grounded theory approach taken by the documentary analysis in the wider systems, this method was more concerned with linguistic and discourse content. It would focus on the language used in the text and what it conveyed about the meaning of the subject matter (e.g. creativity) to the participant (see Bazeley, 2013). This meant analysis for themes and keywords to help flesh out what creativity meant to these

practitioners, examining their witting or unwitting indications and then triangulating them with the interview data and the observations.

The use of the narrative model shows that the progress of the protagonist is influenced by the setting and the external mechanisms in the story: no forest means no wolf, and no wolf means a very different conclusion for Little Red Riding Hood. Accordingly, it is important to look at the path that links the inner world of the protagonist with the outer world. In the case of educational approaches, this path is the practice taking place in the early years settings, linking the child's microsystem with the exo- and macrosystems of legislation, curriculum, governance and culture. As was established in the previous chapter, to say whether practice is producing creativity is too subjective, therefore the study was looking for certain features which indicate whether or not creativity is being fostered: the core features of learners' and teacher's engagement (Cremin et al., 2006 in Craft, 2008) once again. The following table shows how those features might manifest in practice, using the descriptions supplied by Craft (2008):



Figure 3 - Criteria for the core features (adapted from: Craft, 2008).

The process was conducted through the collection of a series of narrative or unstructured observations of practice in each setting, which are better suited to seeing how a setting works (Gibson, 2010). The observations were colour-coded for instances of the above criteria after the field-work had been concluded. This format was chosen as opposed to structured observation for the features in an effort to avoid observer drift or other effects that may be caused by seeking to observe certain phenomena (Robson, 1993). As the designer of this research project, it is difficult for me to forget about the core features entirely, but it was hoped that in trying to observe the general rather than the specific that the process of observation would remain a little more objective.

Observation in the field is not perfect; one of the biggest issues is that of observer effects on the observed practice, this can include the famous Hawthorne Effect or other more negative impacts (Hammond & Wellington, 2012). Robson (1993) suggested two main strategies for dealing with such effects: either minimal interaction with the group or habituation of the group to the observer. The former course is difficult with young children who are naturally curious and it may be possible that the presence of a stand-offish adult may be uncomfortable for the children, thus impacting upon their behaviour. Instead, I endeavoured to habituate myself into each setting by introducing myself at circle time and engaging in play activities with the young children until they felt comfortable enough with me to ignore me periodically. In practice, the children's curiosity never fully abated, they might be fully engaged in their activities and not notice me, but they might also be drawn to me and my notebook, wanting to know what I was doing or frequently wanting help, on occasion adding to my notes with some marks of their own!

Robson (1993) states that while it is very difficult to establish what the observed behaviour might have been like if the observer had not been there, there are methodological and ethical issues regarding how the researcher situates him or herself respecting this conundrum. If, as Sikes & Nixon (2003) suggest, the moral foundations of educational research should be prioritised above the methods, this implies a responsibility to put the children's wellbeing first. The study must accept that the observed behaviour may well be influenced by the observer, particularly where to mitigate this by withdrawing from the children's overtures might cause them upset. It is perfectly possible that such efforts might be a vain enterprise in any case as Rosenthal and Fode's (1962) well-documented rat experiments show, there is a certain inevitability regarding observer effects. Their research seems to indicate that a project such as this, where there is no desired outcome as such, might be less susceptible to these effects



(Rosenthal and Fode, 1962), but it is perhaps better to accept that the observed behaviour is what was present on these days and under these conditions rather than making claims for their representativeness of practice at all times. This might not be the threat to validity it seems, indeed, in terms of generalizability, Bazeley (2013) states that this should stem more from the application and understanding of the processes involved as opposed to the description of the information that arises from them.

The last set of methods focus on the children themselves and their experiences regarding creativity in their settings. This study has repeatedly drawn attention to the fact that creativity is subjective and difficult to measure, however, there are a multitude of tests available with the stated aim of being able to measure a child's creativity, for example the Torrance test. This test was designed by E. Paul Torrance in the 1950s, after extensive research, in order to measure certain mental abilities – fluency, flexibility, originality and elaboration - that he felt were indicative of creative thinking (Runco et al., 2010). Yet the use of such tests in this project would not be practical, firstly because the majority require a psychologist to administer them, and secondly, as has previously been argued, much emphasis has been placed upon the subjectivity of creativity. Torrance was measuring originality (Runco et al., 2010), which again is arguably subject to the experience of the person doing the measuring. Quite apart from this, Gardner (2006) contends that the validity of such tests was never properly established and Torrance himself recognized that high scores on his scales did not necessarily indicate creative accomplishment because factors such as motivation could impact upon them (Runco et al., 2010). This project therefore prefers to look at whether creativity is being given the chance to flourish rather than whether it is actually taking place.

If we are interested in the cultivation of creativity in children, perhaps it is their own subjective opinion that might reveal most about whether that is taking place or not. Duffy (2006) has tried to unpick the creative process and suggests that there are 4 stages that are passed through by the would-be creator: curiosity, exploration, play and creativity. Within this process, she notes the importance of being allowed to make mistakes in order to refine their thinking and also the vital role played by schema (Duffy, 2006). Schema are repeatable patterns of behaviour that focus on children's particular interests and a child who has the opportunity to engage with their schema is said to be engaged in a creative process as they are making new connections and forming understandings (Duffy, 2006). So schema might be viewed as the key to unlocking whether the child feels their conditions for creativity are being met. This part of the study required some methods that would try to identify what the

children's interests were and ascertain whether they have the opportunity to fully explore them.

Two methods have been borrowed from the Mosaic Approach (Clark & Moss, 2001) which, much like Erben's (1998) web of complexity asserts that deeper understanding of children's perspectives requires a multi-method approach, hence 'mosaic' (Clark & Moss, 2001). This study chose to use setting tours and a map-making exercise to try to understand how children felt about their experiences. On the walking tours, the child led the researcher around the setting, which was all recorded, and during the map-making exercise the child was encouraged to draw the setting while any conversation was recorded. The children had control over the length and content of their tours and drawings, though they were given prompts such as 'what is over there?' or 'Is there anything else you would like to show me?' This meant that the tours varied considerably, which could be frustrating, but all of them contain the information that the child wished to transmit, not what the researcher wished to find. Bearing in mind the understanding that children may communicate in 'a hundred languages' (Malaguzzi, 1997 in Thornton & Brunton, 2005), interpreting the final transcripts and pictures was not entirely straight-forward, there were variances in speech and vocabulary, drawing abilities and interpretations of instructions. However, using the idea of the mosaic and picking up on cues such as body language, expression and gesture, a picture of how the children felt gradually emerged.

By using the core features of learners' and teacher's engagement (Cremin et al., 2006 in Craft, 2008) to analyse the data from the narrative observations, the study aimed to establish whether or not creativity could be fostered by practice within the settings. As has been indicated in all the setting-specific methods, it was hoped to triangulate these methods in order to build up a picture of what was actually happening in settings and why. To achieve this, it seemed that the same core features could be applied to the data across the methods used with practitioners and children as a thematic content analysis. Hammond & Wellington (2012) describe this technique as a systematic approach for interpreting data: though the five data sets in question may be diverse in content, analysing for these features would help to highlight the connections between them such as practitioner perspectives and actual practice. It has been noted that triangulation between methods is imperfect owing to the different epistemological foundations (Blaikie, 1991 in Hammond & Wellington, 2012), however, the consistency (or indeed inconsistency) that such a technique might generate can only lend greater credibility to the project (Hammond & Wellington, 2012). Regarding the practitioner

and child-specific methods, it should be noted that the features were designed to look at what is happening with both parties in the setting, rather than separating them out, therefore some of these methods may only be able to supply allusions to the features rather than recording their occurrence.



Figure 4 - Triangulating the setting-specific data.

These particular methods were piloted in an English early years setting nine months before the main fieldwork was carried out, enabling some adjustments to be made to the procedures. Transcribing the interviews with practitioners showed that the questions did not always use consistent language, leading to some confusion around key terms. Furthermore, while a question was asked about which areas of practice the interviewees felt were their strongest, they had not been asked about their weaknesses, which would have given a more balanced picture. It also was noted that the practitioners in the pilot study approached the reflective stories in highly individual ways. This caused some concern on the first reading because they varied considerably from the responses that I had imagined. Yet on consideration, the recognition that a text may contain both witting and unwitting information (e.g. Robson, 1993; Robinson, 2010) suggested that these very differences might represent important information in themselves. It was also decided that a quantitative analysis of the vocabulary within these texts could be achieved in a manner in keeping with the aesthetic emphasis of this project using a web 'toy' called Wordle™, which creates cloud shapes from text whilst highlighting the

frequency at which words are used by making the most frequent words appear larger than the others (wordle.net, 2013). Here is an example from the pilot study:



Figure 5- Pilot Study Wordle.

Sadly, in spite of this work, during the actual study the reflective stories proved difficult to obtain and consequently to analyse. Interestingly, the staff at the Catalan settings returned theirs promptly and gave well-considered answers, seeming to reflect on the implications of the incidents they described. The English practitioners, however, appeared disinclined to fill these in Setting A only produced one out of ten, in spite of the best efforts of this researcher, and Setting B fared slightly better in producing three out of six. The content of these English documents varied hugely - from one sentence to three pages - a phenomenon that did not appear to correlate to training and experience levels, thus suggesting disinclination on the part of several of the respondents once again.

Perhaps this disinclination is cultural: there is a well-documented dislike of bureaucracy in the United Kingdom (Williams, 1983) that is manifested in the revised EYFS which insists that 'Paperwork should be limited to that which is absolutely necessary to promote children's successful learning and development.' (DfE, 2012a: 10). It is possible that this particular task was rather too close to paperwork for the English participants or maybe my status as a foreigner in Catalonia played upon the national character as a *terra d'acolliment* (land of welcome) (Eaude, 2007), improving response rates. Whatever the reasons for this difference might be, it was decided that these reflective stories could not be considered a valid method as they had not fully achieved their aims (Robson, 1993), therefore they were removed from

the presentation and discussion of the final results. For curiosity, typed copies of the stories and their Wordle™ forms may be found in Appendices E and F.

The separation between my own expectations and what actually happened during the implementation of the methods during the pilot study was a recurring issue. The tours varied greatly from child to child, from how they communicated, to the length of the tours and the extent of the setting that was covered. The fieldwork for the pilot study and the analysis of its findings was a salutary lesson in focusing on what was actually happening as opposed to what it had been imagined would happen. Using the methods based on Clark & Moss's (2001) Mosaic Approach required a real change in mindset in order to truly listen to children. What I might construe as the tour not being conducted properly according to my parameters was in fact a strong message from the child regarding their interests, feelings and engagement. The complexities of the content supplied by both tours and map-making also led to the resolution to keep clear notes about each activity to reinforce the recorded material. The sheer amount of data that were produced by these methods also led to a revision in the proposed number of settings that would be visited. These were all valuable lessons that contributed to both the execution of the methods, but also the organization and analysis of the data collected.

Analysing the full range of data outlined in this section naturally required different approaches according to the method, as has already been touched on. While varied methods and their consequent approaches to analysis are quite standard for research projects that are largely qualitative in nature (Bazeley, 2013), it was important that though the data should draw out the separate elements of the story, it should also be able to form a coherent whole. If it is an aim of narrative research to provide a 'nuanced view of reality' (Bathmaker, 2010) then it is important to take in the whole of said reality, as opposed to focusing purely on the nuances within it. Indeed, Bazeley (2013) highlights that concerns may be raised about methodological approaches that are more catholic in their choice of methods regarding their structural integrity and firmly suggests that it is vital to draw connections between the data sets just as much as to explore, code and refine each area. Consequently, an overarching analytic strategy for this study would need to be provided. So how might this be accomplished within the complex framework of this project? It has been suggested that such a process requires a simultaneous consideration of both the individual aims of each set alongside the over-arching aims of the project (Bazeley, 2013). This particular project generated four research questions at the end of the previous chapter, which could be used as themes to link the different data sets together:

- What are the two national cultural perspectives regarding creativity in education?
- What are the prevailing policy approaches to early years education and creativity in each country?
- How do these cultural and policy approaches translate to impact on the fostering of creativity in the early years setting?
- What degrees of difference are there in the actual fostering of creativity in early years settings between the two countries?

Consequently, a version of Bazeley's (2013) *Describe, Compare, Relate* sequence for analytic writing could be used for each method: describing the results, comparing the results from each country and then relating them to these research questions. By following this strategy, it should be apparent how each element of the story addresses the research questions whilst enabling conclusions to be clearly drawn.

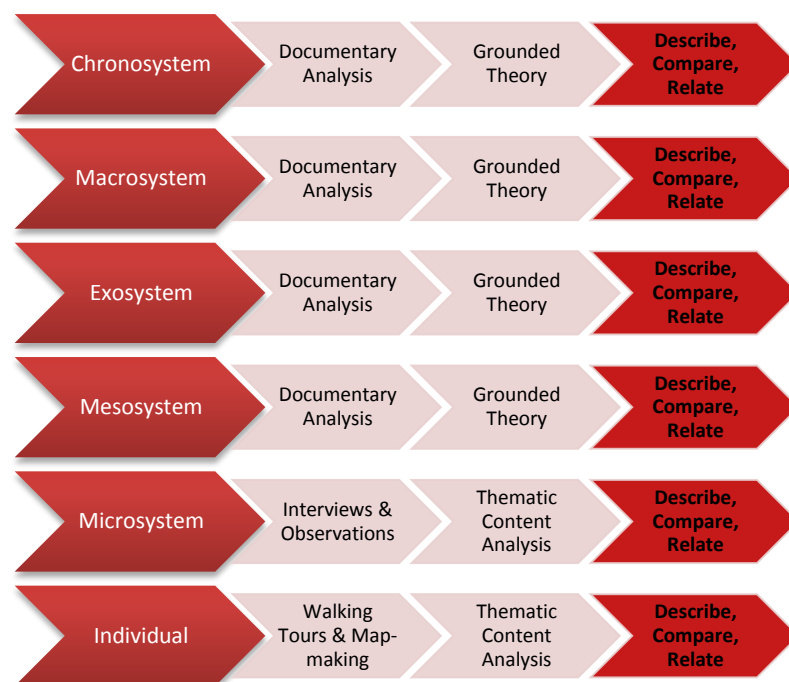


Figure 6 - Overarching analytic strategy.

This section has enumerated the methods that were used to explore each layer of the ecosystem in order to unpick the narrative around the cultivation of creativity within the early years: documentary analysis, interviews, observations, walking tours and map-making. While the diagram above clearly delineates what methods will be used to address each layer of the ecosystem and how they will be analysed, it is important to remember that an ecosystem is a model of interconnectivity, therefore there will be a degree of crossover in the types of data

that apply to each layer. This means that it may be necessary to bring in data from the interviews to corroborate information in the exosystem, for example.

This section will conclude with a final word on subjectivity. It is important to recognise that just as the narrative is said to be constructed in collaboration along with the researcher (Bathmaker, 2010), analysis of qualitative data often bears the fingerprints of the researcher's own experiences too (Bazeley, 2013). Accordingly, it must be acknowledged that data are not only likely to have been collected via my own subjective filter, but also to have been analysed correspondingly: other researchers may not read things in quite the same way. This, however, is the nature of stories: they are unavoidably shaped by their author. All this project can aim to do is to present the narrative, acknowledge my role as author and invite a critical reading of said story.

## **Setting and Sampling.**

The remit of this study takes in the full panorama of influences that may impact on how an approach to early years education may cultivate creativity in young children, including the historical, cultural and political contexts of each country. This has meant that a large part of the research has been conducted as documentary analysis, however, as it is also concerned with how these approaches actually manifest in practice, it has been necessary to visit some early years settings too. The methods aimed at gathering this type of data took place in four settings catering for the care and education of children between the ages of 3 and 4; two in England and two in Catalonia. It was decided to narrow the focus onto children of this age as the parameters for what classifies as early childhood education differs between the two countries: in England the EYFS takes in five-year olds (DfE, 2012a), while in Catalonia this category would extend to six-year olds (Departament d'Educació, 2008).

As indicated in the previous section, the decision regarding the number of settings to be included was taken as a result of the amount of data that the methods produced in the pilot study. Sample size is known to impact upon the generalizability of a project (Robson, 1993) and these are small samples, calling into question how representative they can be. However, Robson (1993) does point out that requirement of larger sample sizes depends upon the variability of the population, where the greater the variability, the larger the sample size required. Fortunately, the study is concerned with how the official national approaches influence the fostering of creativity, not with the range of approaches and settings that may be found. As such, it has eschewed settings which may fall outside or vary from the national remit

such as Steiner, Montessori or other independent models which have been granted full or partial exemptions from the Early Years Foundation Stage in this country (DfE, 2012b), or in Catalonia's more flexible framework that simply take a radically different approach to the norm. The settings chosen therefore broadly represent normal practice in each country, however, it should be noted that the project is concerned with the particular as well as the general. The series of observations and interviews from within each setting provide a detailed picture and it is these details that researchers such as Clough (2002) and Clark & Moss (2001) employ to amplify the voices of the individuals. This part of the project is less concerned with generalizability than the experiences of the participants as protagonists in their stories. Perhaps these data can only ever be considered a snapshot, but snapshots nevertheless that may shed some light on actual practice within each system.

The principal issue in comparing the two systems has been in attempting to match settings that have been generated by two quite different approaches; there is little equivalence between the English patchwork provision of early years settings remarked upon by Gearon (2002) and the Catalan nursery classes administered by the state in schools (Jefatura del Estado, 2006). However, it is these very differences that this study is attempting to explore in trying to unpick creativity in early years education. Type of setting then was not a variable that could be matched, as highlighted above, it was simply important to choose two settings that straightforwardly implemented the curriculum of each country. In England, where most early years education is typically provided by the private and voluntary sector (Pugh, 2006), it was important that one such setting should be represented in the sample. Though much fewer in numbers, local authority nurseries appear in most English districts, therefore it was decided to include one of these in order to represent the typical range in England. Owing to the uniformity of Catalan provision, no such decisions were necessary for Catalonia for that country.

The settings chosen were located in areas and intake that were matched demographically inasmuch as the socio-economic background of the local areas and the families attending the settings were broadly similar. More details about these characteristics can be found in the setting profiles in Appendix B. Ultimately, however, a degree of convenience sampling has gone into this. Three out of four of these settings were obtained through personal contacts of mine, who either worked or had worked in them. The fourth was found through internet searches for the required characteristics and then making telephone contact. Robson (1993) states that convenience sampling is not conducive to gaining a representative sample,



however, he does suggest that in certain types of research, such as where the researcher is simply trying to get a feel for the issues, such a strategy is fine. Above all, Robson (1993) highlights that some types of research, such as case study, are not concerned with sampling as they are not seeking generalizability. This research project is not an experiment, it is seeking to tell the story of the cultivation of creativity in early years education, therefore experimental conditions are not a requirement.

Gathering the data within the settings was also complicated by the differences in early years education between the two countries. The biggest difference was in the number of adults within each setting. For children aged three to four in England, there must be one qualified adult for every eight children, unless that adult has Qualified Teacher Status or Early Years Professional Status, in which case they may have thirteen children (DfE, 2012a). In Spain, and thus in Catalonia, a nursery teacher may have up to 25 children and there is no requirement for them to have an assistant (Jefatura del Estado, 2006). Rather than interviewing all the practitioners of all levels in the English settings, which would have produced a considerable quantity of data, it was decided just to interview two, to match the teachers and their assistants in Catalonia. To further match the teacher's role, at least one of those English practitioners should be responsible for leading practice in that setting, regardless of their qualifications. The same approach was not applied in the requests for reflective stories, as I was interested in what the range of qualifications and experiences in English settings might say in comparison with the more homogenously qualified Catalans; therefore the whole staff team was invited to respond.

In terms of the child participants, bearing in mind the moral impetus once again (Sikes & Nixon, 2003), rather than choose or allow the practitioners to choose who should take part, the children were allowed to choose themselves. The first three children to respond positively to my request, or indeed those who invited themselves to take part were the ones who formed the sample group. This does of course raise questions about the truthfulness of the exercise for all children: surely only children who were content and comfortable would be happy to participate? If so, would these children not be exactly the type of children whose needs were being met and were therefore able to express their creativity? This is a dilemma that cannot be easily resolved, and certainly not in using these particular methods – as established earlier, an ethical approach to research requires informed consent from its participants (BERA, 2011). Therefore to oblige children to take part would not only be unethical, but would in all likelihood lead to skewed results as the coerced child's emotional

state may well impact upon the information they share with you: an example of unreliability with both subject error and subject bias at its heart (Robson, 1993).

It is recognised that it is important to consider whether the time samples observed offer a representative picture of a phenomenon (Robson, 1993). From personal experience, I am familiar with this issue: the hectic Monday mornings, tired and grizzly children and worn-out staff towards the end of the week, pent-up energy on rainy days; all of which can have a considerable effect on practice. The limitations of this project, including the amount of data that could be realistically processed, geographical constraints as well as the capacity of the settings to accommodate the project all combined to limit the amount of time that could be observed within each setting. Bearing these factors in mind, the study has endeavoured to pursue some degree of authenticity by observing at six different points in time across two days. These observations were approximately 25 minutes in length, and where possible they were taken in different areas of the setting or during different activities in order to gain a more rounded impression of practice in the settings.

### **Ethical Considerations.**

In the section on comparative methodologies it was highlighted that cross-cultural differences can raise ethical issues for the study; indeed, different cultural values may even affect the implementation of the study (Lindsay, 2010). There are certainly big differences between England and Spain regarding child protection policies and access to children: Catalan schools were happy to take it on trust that I was a suitable person and left me unsupervised with children frequently, though I tried to avoid it. Carrying out fieldwork in England faces the reverse of this: the researcher must provide evidence of their Disclosure and Barring Service checks and it can be difficult to negotiate the opportunity to undertake one-to-one activities, trying not to inconvenience the staff who must supervise you whilst remaining in ratio with the children. The first of these two situations, conducting research in Catalonia, raised ethical issues about my personal responsibility, even though I was abiding by local rules and expectations. The second of these situations highlighted the impact of the study on the setting: could the burden of my presence impact on the welfare of the children? The ethical guidance offered by the British Educational Research Association (BERA) (2011) states that an educational researcher should 'operate within an ethic of respect for any persons involved in the research they are undertaking' (BERA, 2011: 5). The issue of how to conduct this study with respect was more complicated than might be expected: should the local practices and wishes of the head be respected though they clashed with my beliefs regarding respect for children

and their families? Could the implementation of the fieldwork phase of the study constitute a lack of respect for children in itself?

Though personal experience in both countries has helped to provide cultural and language preparation, my status as a foreigner in Catalonia inevitably stood in the way of overcoming those language and cultural barriers (Hartas, 2010c) that were referred to in the earlier section on international comparison or indeed may have led to conflicts of understanding or assumptions about what was happening (Robinson-Pant, 2005). To try to mitigate these issues, contact was made with representatives of the Universitat de Barcelona and the Catalan Departament d'Educació in order to get a better picture of local expectations regarding educational research, though as mentioned earlier, little guidance was given. Such research in the United Kingdom must follow the ethical guidelines laid out by the British Educational Research Association (BERA, 2011) yet there is no such equivalent association for Spain. This study looked at some articles published in Spain discussing ethics in educational research and found that many referred to the guidelines of the American Educational Research Association (AERA, 2011). It was brought to my attention that there is in fact a European Educational Research Association (EERA) too, though this does not seem to have its own set of ethical guidelines, preferring instead to refer researchers to those produced by AERA, BERA AND SERA (Scottish Educational Research Association) (EERA, no date). Thus it seemed appropriate to consider the requirements of both the BERA and AERA guidelines in designing this project.

Central to these particular documents is a requirement for the participants to give their informed consent to take part (AERA, 2011 & BERA, 2011): the participants should be clear about the aims and the methods of the project. In order to accomplish this, the following steps were planned: all participants were to be clearly informed about the objectives and methods of the research project both verbally and with a written factsheet in the appropriate language: the translations were checked by a Catalan contact to ensure appropriate content. In the case of the participating children, these factsheets were to be supplied to the children's parents. This approach was used successfully in the pilot study, which took place in England and indeed the later fieldwork in the same country, but failed on implementation in Catalonia. As perhaps indicated by the existence of an organisation such as BERA, ethics of educational research form an important part of the training and literature here in the United Kingdom: beyond a code of practice (BERA, 2011), most texts on educational research have a section on ethics (e.g. Lindsay, 2010; Robson, 1993) and universities insist on a researcher receiving ethical approval for their proposed projects (e.g. Hammond, 2011) - the document for this project may be

found in Appendix A. As a result, the principal of informed consent should feature strongly in the design of a research project. This would prove to be one of the assumptions about educational research that Robinson-Pant (2005) highlighted as a stumbling block in educational research: not all our values are the same.

On arriving at the Catalan settings, the head-teachers were horrified by the idea that their parents would be given letters and asked to give written consent. This was a clash of cultural assumptions: what is considered the right thing to do in terms of trying to deliver a more equal balance of power between participant and researcher as well as a precaution against future issues in this country, is viewed with great suspicion in Spain, as, from personal observation, are most things which appear to be official. One head-teacher explained that all parents would be happy and even proud that their child and school were being researched, but that paperwork and particularly having to offer a signature would make them think that something was going on and they were being fooled into something they did not fully understand. Anything official is viewed as the domain of the head-teachers alone, and they happily signed and stamped permission letters for me. This did not fully address my concerns about respecting the children and families' rights to be fully informed and to have the freedom to choose. After some discussion, we were able to agree on a compromise where I would address all the parent's verbally, fulfilling my cultural need for informing the participants' parents and receiving their consent, while respecting their own cultural apprehensions about bureaucracy and officialdom. I also offered them my business cards should anyone wish for further information, but as yet I have received no emails.

It is slightly more problematic obtaining truly informed consent from children, but this study has endeavoured to respect children's rights to self-determination by explaining the purpose of the activities in a clear and simple manner so that children were aware that information would be recorded and used for my purposes and were able to choose at any moment whether or not they wished to participate. This approach, called obtaining ongoing assent, is one which has evolved along with the increase in research that is being carried out with young children (Dockett et al., 2013). It reflects the shift in values from the Lockean view of the child as a 'Tabula Rasa' (Locke, 1690) to that of the active being with rights and opinions upheld by Article 12 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) (UN, 1989), and in keeping with the aims of this study, upholds the child's voice in the narrative. Regardless of wider national differences, the study endeavoured to be sensitive to the needs of the individuals taking part in the study, taking into account their personal feelings at the time of

the research, for example allowing participants to dictate the length of time they spent taking part and assuring their comfort and permissions for each separate activity.

The data recorded in the course of the study can be made available to the relevant participants upon request and it was made clear that requests to partial or total withdrawal from the project would be respected, though no such requests were made. Throughout this document care has been taken to ensure that all settings and participants remain anonymous and the original fieldwork documents are being kept securely, and have been shared only with my supervisors. What of the question regarding the ethicality of implementing the study in the first place? This is a difficult question, AERA (2011) favour the old medical injunction to 'do no harm', accordingly there is a responsibility incumbent upon myself as researcher to be aware of the setting, the children and the staff around me and to notice if my presence is having a negative impact upon them. I tried to be sensitive to the demands of time and attention on staff and the well-being of the children, ensuring that methods were not conducted at inconvenient times and keeping in mind the option of stopping the fieldwork, should it have proven necessary. This study endeavoured to approach its methods in the most ethical way possible and, in accordance with the BERA (2011) guidelines, its purpose is ultimately to extend knowledge and understanding. It also tried to be open and honest both towards its participants, but also with itself and to its readers about its failings. As Robinson-Pant (2005) emphasises, the cross-cultural researcher in particular (though this is true for the native settings too) is faced with certain dilemmas in trying to produce 'good' research. Where these dilemmas have arisen, this study has tried to unpick them, resolve them and judge the outcomes on the overall bearing of the project.

### **Proairesis - To Be Continued...**

Choices were made about how the study should progress: how best to unpick the phenomenon of the cultivation of creativity in children aged 3 - 4 within the education systems of England and Catalonia. In viewing this phenomenon in terms of a narrative, it was hoped to take account of the different factors that impact upon the experience of the children such as the setting and history - or back story. This approach is supported by existing research such as Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological model, which shows that the experience of the individual is enmeshed in a system of influences that include the moment in time, politics, culture and other individuals. Looking at the spectrum of influences upon a child's experiences meant taking a pragmatic approach to the selection of methods: it was imperative to find methods

that were suitable for each layer of the ecosystem, even though these needed to be quite different.

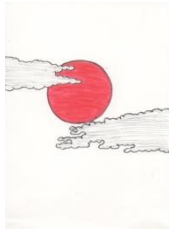
It appeared that the outer spheres of the ecosystem would be best explored via the medium of documentary analysis which would be carried out and analysed according to the processes of grounded theory. This would allow the narrative to emerge, as opposed to confining its exploration to pre-defined categories (Hammond & Wellington, 2012). The inner spheres used several different methods to look for different clues about what was happening with practitioners, children and in the relationships between them, though they could be triangulated through a thematic content analysis for the core features of learners' and teacher's engagement (Cremin et al., 2006 in Craft, 2008). Finally, in order to show how all the data linked together, the same process was applied to each section: describing the data, comparing the data between the two countries and relating them to the research questions (see Bazeley, 2013).

The fieldwork element of the study took place in two early years settings in each country, in towns which had been matched for similar socio-economic status. Owing to differences in the delivery of early years provision in each country, it was impossible to achieve a true match, but the settings were chosen as being fairly representative for each system. These differences extended to the adult participants available, as the Catalan settings had a maximum of two members of staff, whereas the English ones had a full team. The study considered several ethical dimensions to the project, particularly the national differences regarding what might be considered good practice, as highlighted by Robinson-Pant (2005), and the consequences of the study upon the general well-being of the children. Ultimately, a pragmatic approach to knowledge gathering was taken by this study, adapting its methods to suit both the research questions but also the needs and comfort of its participants.

## Chapter 4 - Research, Results and Discussion: Picking a Path through the Woods.



The study has now reached the juncture at which the stories of creativity in early years education can begin to emerge. In terms of tracking those stories, the methods will be considered sequentially. As the composition of these two national narratives is being compared to an ecosystem, where the interplay of diverse factors contribute to the state under study, the structure of this chapter will explore each element using the adapted version of Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological model set out in the previous chapter. It is hoped that these sections will enable the reader to follow the narratives whilst helping to leaven a very large, multi-stranded chapter. Beyond presenting the data that have been collected to build this picture, each section will compare the two countries and relate the data to the original research questions, as per Bazeley's (2013) sequence for analytic writing. Being an ecology, there are overlaps between each element; therefore data may crossover from section to section.



## **Chronosystem – Place in Time.**

As identified in the earlier exploration of the literature, creativity may currently be said to occupy a central position in the global zeitgeist, affecting both of the countries this study is focusing on. This presence is largely due to popular conceptions of creativity as a driver for innovation and success in industry (e.g. NACCCE, 1999; European Commission, 2010). Beyond this recognition that creativity is essential for economic growth, there have also been changes over time regarding what education is for. This section will be focusing on how history has influenced the way in which creativity may be fostered in young children within each system. Early years education, in that it is designed by adults for children, must logically be considered as indivisible from adult constructions of childhood. As such perceptions are acknowledged to be firmly rooted within their social, spatial and historical contexts (James & Prout, 1997), the evolution of early years education can be said to mirror the evolution of constructions of childhood.

### **England.**

There are two standout features about the evolution of early years education in this country. Firstly, it must be remarked upon that in comparison with many other countries around the world, England has had a tradition of stable, middle-ground democracy since at least the end of the Second World War (Douglas, 2005), if not further back. Thus though policy changes can and have occurred, there is perhaps a lesser degree of drama implied by these changes than there might be in other countries. Secondly, one of the most noticeable characteristics about the early years sector is the patchwork nature of its provision, with settings located in schools, old church halls, purpose-built nurseries, settings operating only in the mornings or those that are open 24 hours a day. The early years sector throughout the UK has been described as 'diverse' (Gearon, 2002), and such a characteristic may arguably be seen as a legacy of the way in which it has evolved over the years. This very diversity has also meant that a comprehensive history of early years services in England and the UK in general is recognised as being difficult to achieve (Baldock, Fitzgerald & Kay, 2005), so what follows is a brief summary of the most relevant and documented influences on English early years education and, where possible, the role and impact of creativity.



Educational establishments in England have a long history: some evidence has been found in the work of Juvenal to suggest that the Romans were providing some formal education during the time of their occupation in the early centuries of the first millennium (Gillard, 2011). However, little is known about these establishments and they are believed to have completely died out as the Romans left, therefore the first schools that there is any serious documentation about are those that are said to have been founded by Saint Augustine from 597 in order to furnish his new churches with priests and choirs (Gillard, 2011). Over the centuries, schools proliferated, though access would differ according to social status or gender: it is well-known that Shakespeare, a middle-class boy, attended a grammar school between the ages of 7 and 14, for example (King Edward VI School, 2011). At this time, there were also 'petty' or 'dame' schools for children between 5 and 7 years of age (Gillard, 2011) but early years education as we understand it today was not to appear until much later in the nineteenth century.

For centuries the under-fives had not been sent out to be educated, so the advent of the first nursery schools marked a considerable shift in constructions of childhood, particularly in the early years. This change would appear to be the result of the convergence of a number of different factors. So why were under-fives not attending educational establishments? It is not simply the case that these children were deemed to be best placed at home: there is plenty of evidence to suggest that children were frequently sent out to be cared for, or even stay with, all kinds of secondary care-givers, whether other family members or the wet-nurses so despised by Rousseau (1762) or the proto-childminders who became known as 'baby-farmers' in the early days of industrialisation (Baldock, Fitzgerald & Kay, 2005).

Perhaps it is the name of this last profession that offers some explanation: it has been suggested that children across Europe, particularly those from lower social classes, previously experienced a much longer period of infancy (Sharar, 1990 in Vandergriff, 2002), meaning that up until the period that marked the advent of nurseries, children under five were generally considered to be 'babies'. It would not have seemed appropriate to parents to educate these 'babies' as Hurlock (1953) rightfully points out that babyhood is a 'state of helplessness' causing parents to perceive the child as weak and in need of protection, not as able and ready to learn. In fact, this attitude towards young children seems to exemplify Jens Qvortrup's (1994) suggestion that children have rarely been considered as beings in their own right, more that they are 'becomings'. It is possible that this extended 'babying' may well have been an effect of much higher child-mortality rates, as the appearance of the first nurseries were

closely preceded by a marked decline in these figures, according to data from English parishes (Hill, 1990).

Though extended infancy may have been intimately connected with mortality rates, there are those who argue that the degree of dependency on mothers is something that may be manipulated by society as a means to control the lives of women (see Vandergriff, 2002).

Alongside improvements in health and life-chances came a dramatic change in the structure of society itself: industrialisation. As working-class families moved to urbanized, industrial areas, there came, particularly for women, a separation between residence and workplace which complicated child-rearing practices (Seccombe, 1993). Infancy had traditionally lasted until the age of seven, at which point children would be either put to work, or if their circumstances were better, sent to school (Vandergriff, 2002), now families found themselves with younger children in need of occupying whilst their parents and older siblings were at work in the factories.

These dramatic changes in family life met with a backlash, fed by concerns about children's welfare. Officially, there was a social push to keep mothers out of the workplace as part of a drive to protect children, meaning that there was not felt to be a need to develop early years care, unofficially, however, as noted earlier, this push was unsuccessful, leading to the proliferation of the 'babyfarmers' (Baldock, Fitzgerald & Kay, 2005). Though these early attempts to provide a service in response to a social need could hardly be recognised as education in the modern sense, it is interesting to note that the Latin root of the word - *educare* - means simply to rear or foster, it did not develop the specialised sense we know today until around the time of these particular social changes (Williams, 1983). In spite of prevailing attitudes, there was a growing recognition that such provision, or lack of, was inadequate for young children, but these independent, unendorsed by the state, origins may be shown to contribute to the state of early childhood education in England today.

Early nursery schools in the United Kingdom were modelled on the pioneering example set by the industrialist Robert Owen in New Lanark, Scotland (Gillard, 2011). Owen founded the school for the children of his factory workers, offering places to those between the ages of 2 and 12 and, unlike any factory schools; the provision for those under-five was differentiated into a form we might recognise today: combining instruction with free-play in purpose-built surroundings (Owen, 1824). The New Lanark project was particularly unusual in its view of children: it aimed to prepare them for their own, unique futures by inspiring children's interests rather than inculcating them with facts (Owen, 1824).

Though the account of the education system at New Lanark written by Owen's son, Robert Dale Owen (1824), does not explicitly refer to creativity or imagination, there were significant correlations in the practice with the core features of learner's and teacher's engagement (Cremin et al., 2006 in Craft, 2008) which this project is using as a means to assess whether creativity is fostered by an educational approach. Four of those features, *Posing questions, Play, Immersion in a loving environment and Self-determination and risk-taking* were strongly apparent in this child-centred curriculum, which valued curiosity, kindness over punishment, independence and free-play (Owen, 1824). It is interesting to see that a system which seemed to offer many of the preconditions for creativity did not seem to explicitly value or encourage it, but as could be seen from the literature regarding the place of creativity in popular discourse, it simply did not seem to have the same level of attention as it does today. This may be partly connected to the economic discourse that drives the search for creativity today: the Industrial Revolution was a time of great innovation and creativity so perhaps the urgency was not felt. Or perhaps even in this progressive example of early years education, before the advent of psychoanalysis, the role of creativity was not yet understood.

Some of Owen's ideas were gradually taken up in several industrialised areas, though it is important to recognise how the dominant construction of early childhood as dependent, incipient humans continued to influence the type of provision that was made available: producing settings that would 'mind' the children whilst preparing them for subsequent schooling (Gillard, 2011): as Seccombe (1993) points out, simultaneously expanding the current workforce whilst preparing the next. Yet growth in the sector was slow and there remained no standardisation or regulation for the care and education of younger children for some long while: for the next century at least provision would be spread between industrial schools, dame schools and religious establishments (Gillard, 2011). Unlike New Lanark, many of these aforementioned schools did not differentiate provision for the under-fives: the 1905 Board of Inspectors found that frequently these young children were placed in mixed-age group classes being taught by rote (Kwon, 2002). Yet there were interested parties who, inspired by the works of the great educationalists, recognised that there was a lack of strong pedagogy behind much of the available provision. Some progress in standards was made through the efforts of specialist groups such as the Froebel Society, formed in Kensington in 1874 to promote and offer training in Froebel's kindergarten methods (Froebel.org, no date), the elements of which also bear a marked resemblance to Cremin et al.'s (2006) core features (in Craft, 2008) .

Froebel (Froebel.org, no date) believed that children's early experiences laid the foundations for their entire lives and, consequently, the foundations for society as a whole; thus to produce well-rounded individuals it was important to promote enquiry and reflection, provide opportunities for play and discovery and to gently encourage children's independence and self-esteem. Early years practitioners trained in these methods went on to work in a range of settings up and down the country and the Education Department of 1855 suggested that the use of these Kindergarten methods would be appropriate to help settings meet the requirement for receipt of merit grant (Gillard, 2011). Froebelian methods were well-received by inspectors, particularly those who, like Katherine Bathurst (1904), were concerned that those younger children who did attend educational settings were experiencing inadequate methods and conditions. The findings of the 1905 inspections led to the official exclusion of under-fives from elementary schools (Kwon, 2002): for the majority of children, aside from the few with access to purpose-built nurseries, under-fives were to remain firmly the responsibility of the family, or arguably, their mothers.

Yet gradually other pioneers in the field continued to shape and develop thinking and practice, and indeed still find their ideas recognised in modern English practice. Some of these individuals were home-grown such as Margaret McMillan, who founded the first open-air nursery in Deptford in 1911 (Kwon, 2002), and international influences such as Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi and Maria Montessori (Gillard, 2011). Philosophically, these individuals may have left lasting traces in early years practice to the present day, but in spite of growing interest in improving the quality of early years education, it was not until the 1929 Education Enquiry Committee report that there was any official suggestion that local authorities should be required to provide sufficient nursery care for their districts (Moss & Penn, 1996), and even then, these plans were not realised until the outbreak of the Second World War. Social constructions regarding women and family life were overturned as women were once again returned to the workplace in great numbers to replace the men who had gone to fight, fuelling a need for care places (Baldock, Fitzgerald & Kay, 2005). The scale really was dramatic: in 1938 there had been a total of 222 nursery settings in England and Wales, by 1944 there were 2,343 (Riley, 1979). Post-war, however prevailing attitudes about women's roles (perhaps motivated by a need to find work for returning soldiers) and reduced family sizes meant that many of these settings disappeared (Baldock, Fitzgerald & Kay, 2005; Kwon, 2002): the need for standardisation and regulation of the early years sector was yet to be felt.

The state almost withdrew from early years care and education altogether, excepting that which was available for families who were viewed as unable to cope (Baldock, Fitzgerald & Kay, 2005). This situation continued for several decades: the 1960 Ministry of Education Circular 8/60 prevented any expansion of nursery education taking place (Kwon, 2002). This withdrawal appeared to run contrary to much academic and public discourse: though the need for labour was the primary driver behind the war-time expansion, it had been recognised that there were educational, social and health benefits to keeping early years education, promoted by a nursery schools movement that counted on support from MPs on both sides of the political divide (Riley, 1979). Whether the reasons were economic, social or ideological, however, the fact remains that in the decades following the war, early years education had fallen out of favour with the state. Yet this did not mean that the need for childcare had completely gone away; over subsequent decades, small nurseries, playschools and kindergarten groups, private and voluntary, began to spring up across the country to meet local need and an increasing interest by parents in their children's education (Baldock, Fitzgerald & Kay, 2005; Kwon, 2002).

In spite of an outward attempt to uphold more traditional family structures and values, the post-war period marked the beginning of a new era that would bring about a shift in constructions of childhood, reflective of a change in society itself: the rise of individualism. As a social phenomenon, individualism had been recognised as on the rise before the war and was usually ascribed to the weakening of social norms and structures and increasing individual responsibilities and freedoms that occurred as rural communities were overtaken by large and diverse metropolises (Simmel, 1903). However, individualism is acknowledged to have gained traction and spread dramatically after the Second World War and may be considered to be one of the distinctive markers of most Western societies (Meyer, 1986). It is accepted that in order for a society to function, the human actors within it must be systematically socialized, and that this is usually achieved through institutionalised education (Meyer, 1986). Thus as society changed, so the remit of early years education was required to change too: young children were ceasing to be infantilised bundles in need of minding, but becoming individual beings in their own right.

This change was both marked and facilitated by the growth in the field of child psychology throughout the first part of the century that had helped highlight the individual differences between children and the rise of the welfare state, which gave children rights and citizenship (Hendrick, 1997). It is acknowledged that Western, particularly English, approaches to early

years education are characterised by individualism: favouring learning theories and practices that allow the child to learn by exploring their environment and their own interests (Kwon, 2002). It is these theories and practices, promoting autonomy, recognising the needs and abilities of the individual that are recognised by so many researchers (e.g. Bruce, 2011; Gardner, 2006) as being conducive to fostering creativity.

Appropriately, the next step in English early years education was precipitated from the bottom-up; the work of individuals rather than the state. As noted above, different types of settings had begun to spring up across the country (Baldock, Fitzgerald & Kay, 2005), what was particularly remarkable was the genesis of a new type of early years provision: the playgroup (Kwon, 2002). Unlike previous iterations of early years care, which were frequently a means to free up mothers' time in order to enter the workforce, these settings were often to be found in middle-class areas (Baldock, Fitzgerald & Kay, 2005), suggesting that the motivations for this type of provision were rather different. These groups were usually set up by parents themselves, and in contrast to state nurseries, they remained an intrinsic part of the organisation, working cooperatively to plan and carry out activities with the children; they were far from amateur, seeking to employ qualified teachers as part of the team from the very beginning (Playgroup Movement, 2013).

In 1961, a letter written by one such mother, Belle Tutaev, to the Manchester Guardian garnered a huge response from other parents engaged in, or seeking to get involved in, similar groups and precipitated the birth of the Pre-school Playgroups Association (PPA), later known as the Preschool Learning Alliance (PLA) (Preschool Learning Alliance, 2014). This organisation aimed to offer support to develop small-scale provision in communities lacking such arrangements whilst providing a model to the state of what could be done (Baldock, Fitzgerald & Kay, 2005). The PPA realised that as their groups fell under the remit of the 1948 Nurseries and Childminders Act, they were registered with local health authorities and as such there was no provision to inspect them as educational establishments, leaving them open to criticism; they tried to develop their own Approved Group Scheme to mitigate against this, but it was abandoned after two years (Playgroup Movement, 2013). It was the arrival of the 1989 Children Act that resolved this by stating that any day care settings should be inspected by their local authorities at least once a year (HM Government, 1989).

The birth of the playgroup movement also had a dramatic impact on the nature of English early years education: with parents heavily involved, children began to be viewed more holistically in that the role of their home and family life in their education was more explicitly

acknowledged and families shifted from being passive consumers of education to active partners (Preschool Learning Alliance, 2014). Such a change might be viewed as highly positive for fostering creativity when considered in the light of researchers who highlight the role of social and emotional factors in the creative process.

The patchy, home-grown state of affairs continued throughout the following decades, though an increasing number of researchers and practitioners were beginning to realise that other countries had a more comprehensive response to the demand for quality early years education (Baldock, Fitzgerald & Kay, 2005). The state made moves towards considering universal provision, encouraged by findings such as those of the Plowden Report that: 'nursery provision on a substantial scale is desirable, not only on educational grounds but also for social, health and welfare considerations' (Plowden, 1967: 117). Despite promising developments such as Thatcher's 1972 White Paper 'A Framework for Expansion', serious political interest in the early years would not occur until the late 1990s (Preschool Learning Alliance, 2014), a time which was characterised by an increase in research and publications about what good quality early years education should look like (Baldock, Fitzgerald & Kay, 2005). In 1996, the Conservative government began to take control of the fragmented arrangements: in tandem with a Nursery Voucher scheme for up to 3 terms worth of part-time pre-school education they provided a set of guidelines called *Desirable Outcomes for Children's Learning on Entering Compulsory Education* (SCAA, 1996 in Kwon, 2002). Though this was a positive move in making early years education available to all and making an attempt to standardise quality, returning control of the sector to top-down providers represented yet another change in emphasis regarding the role of early childhood education; as the title of the guidelines indicated, early childhood was once again being seen as a preparatory phase rather than a valuable period in its own right.

The tipping point for early years education in England occurred with the arrival of the New Labour government, when the sector took on the shape that we recognise today. The manifesto that the Labour Party produced for the 1997 general election promised that education would be their 'number one priority' with a massive increase in spending that was to include nursery places for all 4 year olds (Blair, 1997). Despite the fact that the early years were not originally at the forefront of Labour's education agenda, the new government began to slowly bring about some major changes in the sector that would have a significant impact (Baldock, Fitzgerald & Kay, 2005). Though the greatest changes would wait until their second term, between 1997 and 2001, Labour succeeded in funding the expansion of full day-care

places, particularly in poorer areas (Baldock, Fitzgerald & Kay, 2005), and in producing the *Curriculum Guidance for the Foundation Stage* (Department for Education and Employment (DfEE), 2000) for 3 - 5 year olds. Younger children were later addressed by the *Birth to Three Matters* (DfES, 2003) document.

This was a strong move towards more equitable provision, but this document did not yet represent a statutory framework to standardise provision across the country. What it did represent, as argued by Baldock, Fitzgerald and Kay (2005), was recognition of the early years of education as a stage in their own right. This may have been true in a sense; however, its foreword (written by Margaret Hodge MP) stated that it should prepare children for Key Stage 1 (DfEE, 2000). This particular aim perhaps reveals the truth of the matter: early years education was not viewed by the Government as a stage to be valued for its own sake, but as a building block for those that would follow.

The genesis of this document mirrored a political resurgence of interest in creativity, perhaps brought on by the explicit connections that were being made between economic success and creativity, the beginnings of a discourse that is still prevalent today. Craft (2006) traced this back to the 1997 White Paper *Excellence in schools* from the DfEE, which emphasised the importance of preparing children for later life and making use of their distinctive talents. Craft (2006) stated that the discourse initiated in this document was continued by the seminal *All Our Futures: Creativity Culture and Education* (NACCCE, 1999) report that was referred to in Chapter 2, a report that highlighted the importance of creative skills alongside traditional academic achievement for employers. Though Craft (2006) does not draw an explicit link from this report to the *Curriculum Guidance for the Foundation Stage* (DfEE, 2000), the *Government Response to All Our Futures: Creativity Culture and Education* (Smith & Blunkett, 2000) clearly indicated their intention to produce a curriculum with an area devoted to creative development. This particular document did help to embed the concept of creativity into early years consciousness. It incorporated six interconnected areas of learning, one of which being Creative Development, which stated: 'Creativity is fundamental to successful learning. Being creative enables children to make connections between one area of learning and another and so extend their understanding. This area of learning includes art, music, dance, role-play and imaginative play' (DfEE, 2000: 117).

The turn of the century and the second term under Tony Blair coincided with the transfer of regulation of early years provision to Ofsted: before this occurred, inspection of EY settings had been the responsibility of LEAs and Social Services, separating out the regulation of care



and education (Baldock, Fitzgerald & Kay, 2005). The advent of Ofsted meant integrated inspections conforming to a uniform national model (Baldock, Fitzgerald & Kay, 2005). This document, called the *National standards for under 8s day care and childminding*, included in its criteria that the setting should encourage children to meet the Early Learning Goals set out in the *Curriculum Guidance for the Foundation Stage* (DfES & Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), 2003). As Craft (2006) emphasised, for the first time, creativity was on the agenda in inspections.

Interestingly, in spite of the clear carrot of economic success in cultivating creativity, Craft (2006) did highlight that the emphasis on this area was also embedded in a strong concern for children's all-round wellbeing that was manifested in the *Every Child Matters* agenda. This particular document was a real mile-stone in children's care and education, its publication is believed to have been a direct result of the Laming (2003) report into the death of Victoria Climbié, a particularly high-profile child murder that highlighted several severe issues around children's services (Baldock, Fitzgerald & Kay, 2005). New Labour's economic aspirations were tempered by a powerful awareness of the failings towards young children and a desire to do better; perhaps creativity was ideally placed to become popular in this climate, considering its ostensible benefits to both the individual and society.

With these foundations in place, The Labour Government was able to use its third term, from 2005, to close the gap between care and education in the sector further still and give education an even greater prominence. The first statutory curriculum guidance for under 5s, the original Early Years Foundation Stage (DCSF, 2008) came into force in 2008, combining the remits of *Birth to Three Matters*, the *National standards for under 8s day care and childminding* and the *Curriculum Guidance for the Foundation Stage* into one document. The EYFS was firmly embedded in the *Every Child Matters* outcomes of staying safe, being healthy, enjoying and achieving, making a positive contribution and achieving economic well-being, and, like its predecessor, included Creative Development as one of its six linked Areas of Learning and Development (DCSF, 2008). It aimed to provide a framework that would look after the whole child and enable them to reach their full potential (DCSF, 2008) and creativity appeared to have been accorded a significant role in this process. It was recognised that the play-based, child-centred approach that had been fought for had maintained its integrity in this new document (Whitebread & Coltman, 2008).

Though official guidance appeared encouraging for those who championed creativity in early years education, the new curriculum was not without its critics. The *Open EYE* campaign began

in 2007, concerned that the new framework would be too rigid, possibly damaging to children's development and restrict other early childhood education philosophies that families might favour (Open EYE, 2011). This last point did become an obstacle for the EYFS in providing a truly standardised system, indeed, as indicated in Chapter 3, there remain to this day certain early years settings that are exempt from particular aspects of the EYFS, excluding the safeguarding and welfare requirements (DfE, 2012b). These organisations may have applied for an exemption if they were a registered independent school, governed by established principles or had applied for the exemption on behalf of an individual child (DfE, 2012b). In the case of independent schools, exemptions may only be made if they have received an Ofsted judgement of 'Good' or better, for settings in the second category, such as the Montessori and Steiner schools, an exemption may be applied for if the EYFS and the established principles of the setting cannot be harmonised (DfE, 2012b). Steiner schools, for example, prefer an unhurried approach to learning and caution against premature 'intellectuality' such as reading (Oldfield, 2001), therefore the goal-oriented EYFS that aimed to encourage numeracy and literacy by the age of five was anathema to that particular system's deeply-held beliefs.

The EYFS aimed to provide an equality of provision for all children, no matter their background or particular needs (DCSF, 2008), but a one-size-fits-all approach is difficult to impose upon a system as diverse as Gearon (2002) has identified. The other type of exemption available, for an individual child, can be granted if the principles of the EYFS do not fit with the religious or philosophical beliefs of the child's parent or carer (DfE, 2012c). This is a rather more complicated arrangement than the first two types, requiring agreement between parents, setting, and Local Authority (DfE, 2012c), but nevertheless illustrates that England has a population with diverse needs and rights that must be respected. The quest for standardisation of provision had overturned traditional methods, but these had both positive and negative consequences across the sector.

One perhaps unintended consequence was the impact on childminders: as the responsibility for inspecting all early years settings, including childminders was passed to Ofsted in 2001 (Baldock, Fitzgerald & Kay, 2005), the original EYFS Framework saw them being inspected under the same criteria as settings that had a more traditionally educational ethos. This led to an outcry across the sector and apparently caused 4,000 childminders to give up the job (Murray, 2009). Childminders simply had not been prepared for what was expected of them. They were not the only ones: information from 2008 indicated that only 7% of the workforce had post-secondary qualifications (Cook & Lawton, 2008). A new curriculum would require a

new workforce, leading to the development of a new qualification, the post-graduate Early Years Professional Status, which would train staff to lead early years teams to meet the EYFS requirements (CWDC, 2008). The impact of the drive to professionalise the early years workforce will be discussed more fully in the mesosystem.

In addition to changes in statutory guidance, other contributions to early years education were made that explicitly intended to help foster creativity. Another strategy of the Labour Government resulting from the NACCCE (1999) report was the well-funded Creative Partnerships programme (Craft, 2006). This brought artists, scientists and other creative workers into schools to work alongside teachers to inspire children (Creative Partnerships, no date), beginning with the most deprived areas (Aubrey & Dahl, 2013). It was principally aimed at children in maintained schools, from Key Stage 1 through to 4, though certain school-wide projects such as developing the outdoor space had an impact on early years provision within schools (Creative Partnerships, no date). It is implied that this focus on older children was necessary as there was a mismatch in the degree of creative exploration that school-age children were able to do compared with those in nursery: pre-school children were viewed as having better opportunities in this area as creativity was embedded in their curriculum (Craft, 2007; Whitebread & Coltman, 2008). Despite this apparent security in their curriculum, it was of some concern to early years practitioners what was happening in schools: it was felt that pressures from further up regarding attainment in the three Rs would trickle down and encroach upon the freedom to explore and create that characterized the early years at the time (Whitebread & Coltman, 2008).

In spite of the focus on schools, some Creative Partnerships money did find its way into early years ventures. In Coventry, for example, one local authority Creative Director took the decision to extend this work into the early years and put together a team of creative professionals to work with settings (Aubrey & Dahl, 2013). This team collaborated to produce a project called *Second Skin* that was inspired by the Reggio Emilia approach from Italy, which aimed to inspire and extend the knowledge of early years practitioners, enabling them to improve practice by linking creativity across all the Areas of Learning and Development (Aubrey & Dahl, 2013). An evaluation of this project found the approach to have benefitted children both in terms of social and emotional wellbeing and engagement with their learning as well encouraging and empowering staff to try new approaches to curriculum delivery (Aubrey & Dahl, 2005). Another Creative Partnerships early years project in the city found that children improved their motor control, observational skills, speech and expression whilst

acquiring new skills like screen printing and the approach also promoted greater parental engagement in children's learning (Arts Council England, 2006).

Though the work that was carried out in Coventry appeared to have had a powerful impact on the practitioners and children who were able to access it, leading to changes in learning culture, practice and outcomes, it was in no way representative of national practice for the early years. Several similar pockets of investment and activity could be found such as the 5x5x5 project in Bath and Somerset (Arts Council England, 2006), but these were isolated examples. Nor did the Coventry projects represent standard regional practice: Second Skin only involved representatives from five settings, none of which belonged to the private sector (Aubrey & Dahl, 2013). The existence of patchwork provision in the UK appeared to continue to mean disparity of experience for children.

The Creative Partnerships programme ran from 2002 until 2011, when funding ceased (Creativity, Culture and Education, 2012). Those involved in the early years project in Coventry hoped that the project would leave a 'legacy of changed understanding of learning, knowledge and skill acquisition' (Aubrey & Dahl, 2013). Anecdotally at least, I can attest to the lasting impact the project had: participants in the programme were later invited to provide Early Years Professional training, and have arranged creative workshops at different settings in the area. These workshops have in turn inspired more settings to use open-ended resources - the WEAVE recycling centre still provides these materials and a range of training courses for practitioners across the Coventry and Warwickshire region (WEAVE, 2015). Some attempt was even made to form a creative early years network out of the ashes of the old team, but organising such a thing on a voluntary basis has proved too difficult to last. This ending came about after a change in government to a Conservative/ Liberal Democrat coalition, bringing with it a change in political ideology that would focus upon austerity owing to the global financial crash. This was very much reflected in the Conservative manifesto at the time, which focused upon the economy and debt (Conservative Party, 2010): cuts rather than investments were to follow.

The new EYFS was published by the renamed Department for Education in 2012, it was a dramatically slimmed-down version, seemingly reflecting their intention to reduce unnecessary paperwork (DfE, 2012a). Of immediate concern to many was the statement of intent that appeared in the second paragraph of the introduction: 'It promotes teaching and learning to ensure children's 'school readiness'. The launch of the *Too Much, Too Soon* campaign took place a year later, supported by an array of early childhood experts concerned

that the role of play was being eroded in favour of meeting criteria for tests and checks at the expense of children's health and well-being (Too Much, Too Soon Campaign, no date). These concerns echoed those raised under the previous government of the trickle-down effect that school standards could have on early years practice.

At first glance, the revised Areas of Learning and Development that no longer included Creative Development (DfE, 2012a), appeared to reduce emphasis on the cultivation of creativity, apparently relegating such activity to a specific area of learning and development called 'expressive arts and design'. However, this change was not quite a move towards returning creativity to the arts and crafts ghetto: in line with contemporary thinking on the subject, this document actually emphasised creative practice as an underpinning for all teaching and learning (DfE, 2012a). Nevertheless, the state of creativity in early years provision at present seems contradictory. On the one hand, the curriculum advocates creative play and learning and the Early Years Training Centres work in partnership with charities such as WEAVE (2015) to promote this type of practice. Yet on the other hand there is concern that a focus on assessment and preparation for school will negate these very intentions, ultimately damaging children (Too Much, Too Soon Campaign, no date). Practitioners today must find a way to negotiate their way through conflicting demands.

The early years education sector in England has never been able to shake off its formative influences nor the persistent disagreements about what it should be doing. Though nominally universal, funded, standardised and inspected, the same contradictions about what early years education is for and who should provide it permeate the whole system. The original patchwork of playgroups, nursery schools and kindergartens has simply been subsumed into one early years sector that must operate within one statutory framework: The Early Years Foundation Stage (DfE, 2012a). However, the state of provision remains 'diverse' (Gearon, 2002) with these settings still operating their original mix of full-time, part-time and sessional care, provided by local authorities, churches, small businesses, large businesses and charities. Childminders are still part of this awkward mix: though current Ofsted guidance states that they do not expect childminders to keep extensive written plans of their education programmes, childminders in England are still expected to be helping children to work towards the early learning goals of the EYFS (Ofsted, 2013b). The issues around standardisation, including disparities in practice brought on by funding and resulting differences in the ability to employ highly qualified staff remain unresolved for the moment.

Today, though early years education is deemed non-compulsory as children are not required to receive an education until the age five (National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER), 2013), figures from 2013 showed that 96% of three to four year olds in England benefitted from funded places (DfE, 2013a). The current Government provides 570 hours of early years education and care to each 3-4 year old for free as well as additional tax credits or other grants depending on the circumstances of the family (DfE, 2014). Ideological arguments persist regarding the purpose of early years education, reflecting opposing constructions of children. Much has been made in recent years of the PISA (Organisation of Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), 2012) results, which showed England lagging at least 20 places behind other countries in maths, reading and science, leading to calls to focus more on these areas from interested parties such as business and industry (Confederation of Business and Industry, 2013). Meanwhile, the *Too Much, Too Soon* Campaign (no date) continues to run, arguing that the early years should be valued for its own merits whilst citing research that shows that many of the highest performing countries in the PISA results start formal teaching of literacy and numeracy much later than we do.

Early years education in England today could perhaps be said to mark a collision between these ideological poles, containing both the construct of child as a 'being' in its own right and the child as 'becoming' a school pupil and later, a member of society. This is evident in the current incarnation of the EYFS, which advocates both free-play for effective learning, but also numeracy and literacy, measured by the standard attained in phonics, in order to be 'school ready', (DfE, 2012a). History shows that successive governments may shift the balance slightly from one end of the ideological scale to the other, and that there will always be voices from the media, business and academia calling for less 'schoolification' or more formal methods. Objectively, however, these changes are never draconian: pedagogical practices are never banned as such, they are altered, and it is possible to still see the traces of earlier pedagogical influences in today's methods (e.g. Froebel.org, no date). The English system fluctuates close to the centre, it is a middle-ground system which perhaps reflects our stable society and our middle-ground politics. The question regarding how this system fosters creativity in individual children themselves remains to be answered, though it might appear that the answer may well be: somewhere in the middle, neither much nor little.

### **Catalonia.**

The evolution of early years education in Catalonia has also, naturally, been informed by the evolution of the nation itself. Like England and the UK, there is recognition that early years

education across Spain in general was boosted by the arrival of industrialisation and its history is closely entwined with the changing roles of women and family structure (González Agapito, 1991; Ruiz Berrio, 2010). However, the Catalan nation has behind it a particular journey through history, which has necessarily marked the development of its education system. Where society and politics in England have been described above as 'middle-ground', Catalonia has experienced the very opposite. Along with the rest of Spain, politics in Catalonia have been characterized by their divisiveness, personified by the ideologies of the two sides that fought in the Civil War: simplistically the right-wing Nationalists and the leftist Republicans. It has been argued that the strength of these opposing standpoints has traditionally left little room for the development of a centrist, liberal strand of thinking, (Vilanou Torrano & Soler Mata, 2013). This polarised political background has resulted in a educational history of greater complexity than that of England; accordingly this section is longer in order to adequately reflect this narrative.

It has been noted earlier in this section how successive curriculums in the UK have borne the fingerprints of the politics of the government who has published them, which may have inconvenienced professionals who have had to change their approaches and infuriated academics who believe these methodologies to be wrong (e.g. Early Childhood Action, no date). Yet these consequences pale into insignificance in comparison to events in Spain where educationalists have been known to suffer for being on the wrong side of the divide: school teachers were executed by the Nationalists during the beginning of the war in a bid to eradicate the anti-church ideologies of the preceding government (Beevor, 2006). Catalonia generally took the position of the left, though being under the control of anarchists rather than the principal Republican force; they remained at a remove from the rest of Spain (Beevor, 2006).

The Catalan nation suffered greatly as repeated attempts were made to control its autonomy through the suppression of Catalan language and culture (Beevor, 2006) and it is still possible to see graffiti throughout the land proclaiming in English, Catalan and Spanish that 'Catalonia is NOT Spain'. Times have changed, of course, but education in Catalonia remains more consciously wedded to politics than it might do in England, for example, and a Catalan academic who endeavours to place Catalan educational history too firmly within the development of Spanish educational history runs the risk of being viewed as outside 'genuine' Catalan philosophy (Vilanou Torrano & Soler Mata, 2013). From an external perspective, however, it is hard to ignore the persistent influences and controls that have originated, and

continue to do so, from central government in Madrid, though these must be weighed against a very strong Catalan determination for autonomy. Indeed, there is a significant lack of information available about early developments in the history of education that do not talk about Spain as a whole.

Though the Greeks and the Phoenicians are believed to have first brought writing to the Iberian Peninsula (Phillips & Rahn Phillips, 2010), in common with the British Isles, and indeed much of Europe, the first schools in the Iberian Peninsula are said to have arrived with the Romans in the second century AD, who were endeavouring to assimilate the diverse existing Hispanic populations entirely into the Roman culture and way of life (Bartolomé Martínez, 1992). Municipal schools were founded across the country, including some by prominent thinkers such as the renowned Hispano-Roman rhetorician Quintilian, who also wrote a book - the *Institutio Oratoria* - outlining the theory and practice of rhetoric that included instructions for teaching young children from an early age (Colmenar Orzaes, 2010). It would appear that far from regarding the under-sevens as babies, Quintilian firmly regarded early years education as vital, believing that the first lessons learnt should be the most consistent and durable (Colmenar Orzaes, 2010). He believed that young children should be taught letters and advocated a pedagogic system that was based on play, praise and motivation of the individual (Colmenar Orzaes, 2010), elements that would not look out of place in modern creative pedagogies. The Romans brought Christianity to the peninsula as the last in a panoply of cults from across the empire (Phillips & Rahn Phillips, 2010), and though this did not appear to impact directly upon the Roman schools, it was to have a lasting impact on education throughout the following centuries.

The arrival of the Visigoths and the gradual retreat of the Romans in the 5th Century meant that the Roman municipal schools were closed down (Phillips & Rahn Phillips, 2010); however, this did not mean that formal education disappeared with the Romans as it did in Britain. In truth, the Romans never completely left and the Visigoths have been described as the most cultivated and Latinized of the so-called barbarian tribes; they had a strong hierarchy and were also early converts to Christianity, meaning that they had a complex political and social culture that they needed to disseminate (Bartolomé Martínez, 1992). Education was initially confined to privileged adults, frequently clergy, who were allowed to pursue those arts that were deemed suitable for religious contemplation such as art, music and literature, and was usually carried out one-to-one or in tutor groups (Bartolomé Martínez, 1992). The Christian emphasis meant, however, that subjects such as astronomy or physics were less well-thought of, and



could be conflated with the study of magic (Bartolomé Martínez, 1992). It also manifested itself in concern for the moral well-being of young children, leading the Visigoth people to develop schooling for youngsters in order to forestall corruption of their character; reading and writing would be taught, but primarily as part of the process of evangelising to the community or preparing the next generation of clerics (Bartolomé Martínez, 1992).

The Visigoths in their turn were invaded by the Moors from Northern Africa in the 8th century, who brought with them their own obligation to teach their religion to the masses, as set out in their holy text, the Koran (Bartolomé Martínez, 1992). Children from the age of five would begin to read and write and memorize the verses of the Koran and later education would take on a wider character than the Visigoth approach, including maths and all branches of science (Bartolomé Martínez, 1992). As with the preceding ruling cultures, the nature, location and length of the education a child received would depend upon their status in life and geographical location (Bartolomé Martínez, 1992). The prevailing culture of the peninsula was largely torn between Islamic and the amalgamated Christian one, for the following seven centuries as conquest followed re-conquest (Phillips & Rahn Phillips, 2010). Throughout this period, the autonomy and alliances of the varying regions of Spain were also fluid; though the final victory of the Catholic Monarchs was brought about by the uniting of all of these separate states, though some, such as Catalonia, retained a strong degree of independence (Phillips & Rahn Phillips, 2010).

Though during this time education will naturally have been disrupted, subject to change and far from universal, there is evidence to suggest that there have been facilities for educating under sevens since at least the Middle Ages – 'escuelas de amiga' (Ruiz Berrio, 2010). The name translates roughly as 'school of the friend', but it is important to note the feminization of the noun 'friend' as these were largely places run by women for girls to learn sewing and embroidery, however, they also took on younger children of both sexes, usually teaching them to memorize prayers and times tables (Ruiz Berrio, 2010). Reading and writing was not necessarily taught in many of these places, owing to the fact that the women who ran these places rarely possessed those skills themselves (Ruiz Berrio, 2010). Looking at the history of schooling of young children across ancient and medieval Spain, there is a suggestion that rather than academic excellence, there was a priority to teach those skills and knowledge that would best equip the child for life in the society in which they found themselves. Whether that curriculum consisted of preparing girls for life in the home, re-educating a population into the ways of their invaders, or instruction in the ways and the substance of the prevailing religion,

all of these approaches were valued above knowledge and study for their own sake. Later sections in this chapter will examine whether a grain of this remains in modern Catalan provision, particularly since the original Latin sense of the term 'educated' has left a strong trace in the Catalan language, with a stronger emphasis on being well-brought up or polite than being schooled.

The end of the eighteenth century saw the establishment of the first nursery-type settings across Spain, prompted by the arrival of the Industrial Revolution (Colmenar Orzaes, 2010). These establishments were usually set up by people or organisations of a philanthropic character, but were really welfare-centred as opposed to educational in any sense, responding to social need rather than with particular goals in mind (Colmenar Orzaes, 2010). These settings were driven by concerns that children were being abandoned by their working mothers and also by concerns again about the children's moral character: it was felt that the streets of working-class areas could only provide unhealthy influences (González Agapito, 1991). As a result, early years provision was very much seen as a service for the proletariat, as opposed to something of educational benefit in itself (González Agapito, 1991). It has also been suggested that these new settings were in fact no more than yet another element to be pressed into the service of the requirements of the economy and that rather than addressing dire social issues such as the exploitation of the proletariat that had led to the abandoning and poor education levels of working-class children, these settings simply plugged the gaps sufficiently to allow the situation to continue (González Agapito, 1991).

In Catalonia, the foundation of these settings was prompted by a group of progressive liberals from Barcelona as part of a package of hygiene and progress measures: from 1840 they began to found *casas-cuna* (cradle houses) for babies and *asilos* (asylums) for children from three to seven with timetables that coincided with the working day (González Agapito, 1991). Culturally, industrialisation had a massive effect on national identity, leading to a crisis in traditional and religious values as communities changed, along with family structure through urbanisation and the demands of industries such as the Catalan textile centres that were contracting female workers (González Agapito, 1991). It is important to recognise that these profound societal changes provoked moral crisis amongst the more conservative factions in the country (González Agapito, 1991) and though the genie was clearly out of the bottle in terms of changes that had taken place, this fear would go on to mark both the political turmoil in the century to follow, but also the evolution of early years education itself.

The nineteenth century, bore witness to enormous progress, followed by a precipitous decline in the evolution of early years pedagogy for the three to seven year olds throughout Spain. Where Robert Owen might be recognised as the father of modern early childhood education in the UK, his Spanish equivalent would be Pablo Montesino Caceres, an educationalist from North-west Spain who founded the first kindergarten-style school for three to seven year olds in Spain and, and in the same year that the Barcelona liberals were creating *casas-cuna* and *asilos* as places to simply mind children he devised the first theoretical framework for the teaching of young children in the early nineteenth century and set into motion comprehensive teacher-training (Ruiz Berrio, 2010). Montesino was heavily influenced by Owen's work (Colmenar Orzaes, 2010), however, he had a far wider impact on the education of young children in his country. He returned from eleven years exile in England, brought about by an extended period of political upheaval in Spain, and like many other returnees at that time looked to use the methods and theories he had discovered abroad to help modernize, strengthen and liberate Spain (Ruiz Berrio, 2010).

This crusade had many supporters and the foundation of the first kindergarten-type schools or *escuelas de pàrvulos* (infant schools) as they were known, was backed by the *Sociedad encargada de propagar y mejorar la educación del pueblo* (SEPMAP – Society for the propagation and improvement of the people's education), a group consisting of hundreds of the most important figures in politics, culture, medicine and education (Ruiz Berrio, 2010). This support led to the propagation of the *escuelas de pàrvulos* throughout the nation, including Barcelona (Colmenar Orzaes, 2010). This was a comprehensive project, consisting not only in the provision of settings for young children to attend, but also in a curriculum for them and the foundation of training centres for their teachers, the *escuelas normales*, where practice would be normalised, and finally a board of women inspectors to oversee the settings (Colmenar Orzaes, 2010).

Montesino's methods were largely drawn from his observations of the nurseries he had seen in Britain that followed Robert Owen's template and from his studies of the work of Pestalozzi (Colmenar Orzaes, 2010). For Montesino, early education should consist of moral development, intellectual development and physical development, with this last factor being of primary importance, which has been attributed to his medical background and identification with the ideas of Locke (Ruiz Berrio, 2010). Interestingly, Montesino's term 'physical education' did not simply emphasise strength and fitness, rather it was concerned with education of all the senses as he believed that learning was dependent upon the ability to employ all the

senses in order to encourage a child's interest in observation of the world around them and develop accuracy in those observations (Ruiz Berrio, 2010). After sensation, Montesino considered the intellectual faculties of perception, attention, memory, comprehension and judgement to be of priority and insisted that each child should be continually involved in activities that would help them to develop 'clear and distinct' ideas, this alongside the information received from the senses would enable the child to enter into the processes of independent and abstract thought. Though creativity is not explicitly mentioned in accounts of his methods, the parallels between these and the approaches recognized today as conducive to its cultivation are clear, particularly in the prioritisation of sensory input that is so valued by modern researchers such as Duffy (2006).

Central to Montesino's educational process, and in common with ideas that had taken root in the Visigoth era, was a preoccupation with moral development: he was, however opposed to the type of moral and religious instruction that had gone before, feeling that not only were the lessons mechanical, but that the ideas and words that they entailed were meaningless or confusing to the children, instead he developed a method for teachers to use both reason and the exploration of the children's naturally occurring feelings of love, gratitude and need to help them come to understanding of the idea of an all-powerful deity (Ruiz Berrio, 2010). Over time, he became less and less certain of the existence of an innate goodness, declaring it necessary for the development of moral character to take place through the repetition of virtuous acts so that they would become lasting habits (Ruiz Berrio, 2010). Sadly, in spite of his championing of thought, exploration and reason in the learning process, upon his death his methods gradually fell into misuse as the most basic and mechanical exercises such as chanting times tables and handclapping were retained without the supporting framework (Colmenar Orzaes, 2010).

The period between 1838 and 1850, the heyday of Montesino and his ideas, has been referred to by the educational researcher Carmen Colmenar Orzaes (2010) as the first phase in the rise of the 'escuelas de párvulos', marked by the dissolution of SEPMA and the passing of the founding school 'La escuela de Virio' into the hands of the city council (Colmenar Orzaes, 2010). In this period, the schools were still principally being founded for philanthropic reasons: as has been indicated previously, these were a response to industrialisation, and it has been suggested that perhaps the sector did not grow as rapidly as in other European countries simply because the Industrial Revolution in Spain was a much longer and slower process (Colmenar Orzaes, 2010) though in truth there was clearly still a requirement for childcare as

most children of Catalan urban workers found themselves in the care of *dones d'aguantar criatures* (González Agapito, 1991), the Catalan equivalent of the English 'baby farmers'. Part of this general lack of development may have been due to persistent political and social unrest: the period was marked by continual struggles about succession in the monarchy, opposition parties were highly polarised and continually bidding for control of the Government, leading to 1847 seeing five separate Presidents of the Government (Phillips & Rahn Phillips, 2010).

The period ended with a serious rebellion in Catalonia that was eventually quashed, and the end of the rule of the 'moderates' (Phillips & Rahn Phillips, 2010); however this did not necessarily indicate peaceful times yet. The second phase in the rise of the nursery got off to a clumsy start: though SEPMA had been dissolved, the state had yet to put into practice its own strategies (Colmenar Orzaes, 2010), again the country remained mired in political struggles and revolution, including the rebellion of La Gloriosa, that sought not only to overthrow not merely the leader of the government, but the Queen herself, though once again it could not cure the persistent state of factional squabbling leading only to further changes in governance and shifts from monarchy to republic back to monarchy and so on (Phillips & Rahn Phillips, 2010). In terms of education as a whole there was one significant development: part of the continual conflict between progressive and absolutist factions was the degree of influence the Church was to have on state affairs, as a result, an agreement was made with the Vatican in 1851 in order to try and reduce tensions: Roman Catholicism would remain the state religion and seizing of Church property would cease, but Church contribution to education would be regulated (Phillips & Rahn Phillips, 2010).

The next phase in the development of the *escuelas de párvulos* could be seen as a result of a profound desire to do something about the state of the nation: tumultuous, dangerous and unproductive, it had lost its once mighty empire leaving it amongst the poorest and least-developed nations of Europe: only Catalonia had any serious industry to speak of (Phillips & Rahn Phillips, 2010). Surrounded by corruption, failure and inequality, the intellectual and professional community sought to try to understand and resolve the ailments of the country, drawing upon the works of the German philosopher Krause mixed with aspects of positivism to form an investigative methodology of observation which they turned upon the nation as a method for diagnosis, prognosis and prescription (Britt Arredondo, 2005). The members of this movement were known as the Regenerationists and they applied their methods across a broad range of fields and proposed agrarian, political and educational reforms (Britt Arredondo, 2005). Part of this reform, in terms of education, was to raise the profile of early years

education, gradually uncoupling it from welfare and making it an explicit stage of primary education by law – the *Ley de Instrucción Pública* 1857 – though the founding of further schools was recommended in areas of need as opposed to becoming universal (Colmenar Orzaes, 2010).

In Catalonia, this intellectual search for rebirth would be represented by *Catalanisme*, a kind of romantic idealism that celebrated the indigenous culture, language and the very land that gave birth to it (Eaude, 2007). This kind of ideology would recur in several periods of Catalan history, manifesting today in the present government whose President wrote a paper on reinventing *Catalanisme* for a better country (Mas, 2007). Eaude (2007) noted that, despite its newness, it was a reactionary movement, one which exalted a rural, peasant past as opposed to the modern, industrialised cities. The improvement of the *escuelas de párvulos* across Spain was led by the rector of the University of Barcelona, who recognised the great potential of such places and facilitated the founding of the *Escuela de Párvulos Modelo de Barcelona*, which would become as important as the Virio school in Madrid in terms of the training and studies they carried out (González Agapito, 1991). The Regenerationists' importation of Krausism brought with it an interest in the pedagogy of Friedrich Froebel (Colmenar Orzaes, 2010), whose emphasis on harmony with nature (Froebel.org.uk, no date) blended particularly well with the romanticism of the *Catalanistas*. This particular pedagogy would become the driving force behind the renovation of the *escuelas de párvulos* (Colmenar Orzaes, 2010).

Froebelism was taken on wholeheartedly by the educational community in Spain, beyond being simply an influence, his theories and methods were applied in their entirety to the early years sector across the whole country at the time. The director of the aforementioned model *escuela de párvulos* in Barcelona, Julián López Catalán, was one of the earlier adopters of these methods, taking part in the early trials (Colmenar Orzaes, 2010). Froebel's ideas entered Spanish consciousness via the publication of a series of articles about his work between 1856 and 1867 by several Spanish educationalists (Colmenar Orzaes, 2010). In 1857, the rector of the *Universidad Central*, Fernando de Castro, also visited Germany and Switzerland and attended a talk that set out Froebel's methods; he returned to Spain with books and study materials that went on to inspire the educationalists back in Spain (Colmenar Orzaes, 2010). Having undertaken trials of this system in several *escuelas de párvulos*, professional training in the pedagogy of Froebel began in Madrid in 1874, accompanied by a Presidential order from the Republic declaring that in the *Escuela Normal Central de párvulos* (Central Nursery Training School) they would initiate a Froebelian kindergarten in order to examine the benefits it could

offer to the country (Colmenar Orzaes, 2010). Though the First Spanish Republic that had set this process in motion fell within a year (Phillips & Rahn Phillips, 2010), the returning, monarchy-led regime kept up the impetus, issuing Royal Decrees and Orders dictating how this process should continue from the curriculum the teachers should study and who should implement it (Colmenar Orzaes, 2010).

The first model kindergarten opened in 1879, it was exactly in accordance with Froebel's ideas down to the provision of outdoor and garden areas and the resources and activities the children were given – it was a requirement for the staff members to possess at least the basic teaching certificate in order to be able to work there (Colmenar Orzaes, 2010). The kindergarten, or *jardin de la infancia*, was to administer free provision for children between three and eight of both sexes, which would include such activities as: Spielgabe ('gift' play) and crafts; agriculture, gardening and practical botany; gymnastics and singing; specific lessons such as Christian doctrine, reading, writing, maths and science, which would often be taught through the use of object lessons (Colmenar Orzaes, 2010). A Froebelian education explicitly recognises the importance of allowing a child to be creative (Froebel.org.uk, no date), therefore by utilising this system to the letter, as has been suggested by the literature, early years education in Spain had children's creative development high on their agenda at this time, though the thread of moral and religious development continued to run through the culture.

Julián López Catalán was considered, along with Pablo Montesino and Pedro de Alcàntara García Navarro, as one of the defining triumvirate of influences on the development of early years provision in Spain in the nineteenth century (González Agapito, 1991). In many ways, the seemingly contradictory positions he took on several aspects of early childhood pedagogy could be seen to represent that particular view of Catalan thinking that views itself as unique and positioned in the space between opposing paradigms such as the spiritual and the material (Pujols, 2012). Julián López Catalán was a teacher in the *Escuela Normal de Barcelona* as well as director of the *Escuela de Párvulos Modelo de Barcelona* and in 1866 published his own theoretical work concerning the education of young children: *El arte de educar. Curso completo de pedagogía teórico-práctica aplicada a las escuelas de párvulos* (The art of education. Complete course of pedagogical theory and practice applied to the infant schools) (González Agapito, 1991).

This seminal work was considered to be a foundation document of the early years system at the time and, like Montesino's work, consisted of considerable theory and application to training (González Agapito, 1991). Where the Regenerists sought to both diagnose and treat

the social and political problems they saw around them (Britt Arredondo, 2005), López Catalán's text analysed the state of early years education as it stood, and identified a particular issue regarding a lack of training for nursery teachers (González Agapito, 1991). The remaining volumes of his work then went on to expound his proposals, one of which was dedicated entirely to the moral and religious education of children and was particularly favoured by those conservatives who were concerned by the rise of the workers' movement (González Agapito, 1991).

Though López Catalán was one of the first proponents of Froebel in Spain and included his theories on intellectual development into his own work, there was much about the Froebelian philosophy that jarred with his personal beliefs, particularly the view shared by Rousseau, Pestalozzi and Owen that education should be the natural development of the rational being (González Agapito, 1991). Writing about Froebelism, López Catalán also expounded his view that Froebelism was at heart anti-Catholic, finding the view of the child as inherently good and the precept to respect the child's liberty to be fundamental errors (González Agapito, 1991). Though it has been suggested that López Catalán's attacks on Froebelism did irreparable harm to the progress of early years education in Catalonia, this must be set alongside his undeniable progress in removing memorization and premature reading lessons from the curriculum and in ensuring that the *escuelas de párvulos* were accorded the educational status they deserved (González Agapito, 1991). Julián López Catalán was a teacher, a conservative, but above all he embodied Catalan thought (according to Pujols' (2012) definition) as he trod the line between science and religion.

The second phase in the development of the *escuelas de párvulos* coincided with a period of moderate economic growth known as the *Restauración*, or Spanish Restoration, (Ruiz, 2008) and reached its zenith in 1882 as a liberal government aimed to definitively modernise the country via the renovation of its education system (Colmenar Orzaes, 2010). The new team behind the *Ministerio de Fomento* (Ministry of Development ) had close links to women who were in charge of pedagogical renovation and also prompted the founding of the *Museo Pedagógico de Instrucción Primaria* (Pedagogic Museum of Primary Teaching) and the holding of the *Congreso Pedagógico Nacional* the same year (Colmenar Orzaes, 2010). Along with founding a board of inspectors, this proved to be a good year for women too: they were offered the chance to direct the *escuelas de párvulos* and their education as teachers was to be put on a similar level to those in the rest of Europe (Colmenar Orzaes, 2010).



It was also recognised at this time that there were insufficient settings across the country; census data showed that only a quarter of children were enrolled in early years education in 1880, and though they continued to grow in number, they never reached sufficient quantities (Colmenar Orzaes, 2010). Sadly, the project was never allowed to complete effectively; Froebel's methods were not extended sufficiently throughout the *escuelas de párvulos* owing to a lack of materials and failure to train the entire teaching body (Colmenar Orzaes, 2010). It has been suggested that because most of the population were located in small, isolated pockets in spite of growing urbanization, it was difficult to bring about true cultural and educational advances (Ruiz, 2008).

In spite of influence of Froebel, conservative elements in Catalonia such as the highly influential Julián López Catalán ensured that the settings remained classroom-like in character, with the teacher's desk and board at one end, faced by banks of seats for children at the other (González Agapito, 1991). The final nail in the coffin occurred at the hands of the conservative party in 1884, who returned the concept of early years provision to one that prioritised welfare over education, annulled the board of inspectors and suppressed the course that had been created to train female nursery teachers (Colmenar Orzaes, 2010). The *Decreto Real* (Royal Decree) of July 4<sup>th</sup> 1884 set out the principal learning goals for children in early years settings as being: Christian doctrine, duty and courtesy, numeracy and literacy, understanding of basic ideas and singing (Colmenar Orzaes, 2010). Such a shift in educational aims harked back to those early traditions of the Visigoth period and their preoccupation with the moral character of children. Quite why this abrupt shift took place has been identified as purely political: Froebelism was heavily associated with liberal politics and thus was repudiated by conservative politicians (González Agapito, 1991). This certainly seems to connect with those fears of the connections between creativity and anarchy recognised by Runco & Richards (1997). By the end of the century, there was a distinct feeling of despondency regarding the state of early years education in Spain which continued right until the following century where in 1924 Matilde García de Real, ex-teacher and inspector, lamented the decline of the *escuelas de párvulos* and the lack of training for those who taught in them (Colmenar Orzaes, 2010).

Socially, the new century was to herald a whole new period of unrest, the promise of the *Restauración* was unfulfilled as the economic growth that occurred was unable to support the growth in population and living conditions barely improved (Ruiz, 2008). In 1898 the nation lost the last of its colonies as it was defeated by the United States over Cuba and the Philippines (Ruiz, 2008). Against this background of Spanish crisis, a strong Catalan nationalist

revival was taking place through the 1890s into the new century, it marked in many ways a shift from the traditional political struggles characterized by republicans and monarchists: all the Catalan nationalist was expected to have faith in was Catalonia itself (Ruiz, 2008). Yet within this ideology remained struggles between those who would prefer to conserve tradition, in which it was felt lay the heart of Catalan society, and those who would progress, consequently the process of social and educational development in Catalonia has been marked by a desire to try to reconcile tradition with modernity, even in more recent times (González Agapito, 1991). For this reason, issues such as the role of mothers as primary educators and the provision of quality early years care became important political subjects (González Agapito, 1991). Indeed, the one aspect of Catalan culture that marks all areas of social life from art to education is, as Pujols (2012) contended, a depth and uniqueness of thought that is peculiarly Catalan and is consciously applied to all areas of life: it seems unimportant whether the player is on the left or the right politically, their actions are embedded within a philosophical tradition that connects the very soul of the nation to its every action.

The period leading up to the turn of the century saw this rise in nationalist feeling linking with the Regenerist school of thought; once again education was viewed as a key part of the project, schools were where the new generation of Catalan citizens would be formed (González Agapito, 1991). This movement was known as *Modernisme* and became synonymous with a national mode of creativity, inspired by the political desire for Catalan autonomy and the recognition that only by taking on a more cosmopolitan and contemporary character could Catalonia emerge from its provincial roots (Costa Carreras & Yates, 2009). This was the movement that gave Catalonia the face by which the world still recognises it today, most notably in the revolutionary architecture of Antoni Gaudí, though the thread was to be found across all manner of cultural and intellectual endeavours (Costa Carreras & Yates, 2009).

*Modernisme* was subsumed as the century turned by *Noucentisme* (New Centuryism), which retained certain elements of the original movement such as the establishment of a modern national culture and the use of the Catalan language as a cornerstone of this project though political current behind it was much more socially conservative (Costa Carreras & Yates, 2009). In order to carry out its aims, *Noucentisme* demanded a type of school that was capable of profoundly stimulating the personality and inculcating a new way of being, creating good citizens, the movement was determined to learn from the failure of the preceding system and set about founding the *Escuela Nueva* (New School) (González Agapito, 1991). Though *Noucentisme* may have been more conservative in character than *Modernisme*, the supremacy

of the idea of the Catalan nation above right/left politics meant that there was a drive to incorporate all of its members, which meant extending the same quality of education to all (González Agapito, 1991). Requiring a break with the traditional methods of educating young children, Catalan society found itself returning once again to naturalism, the works of Rousseau and Froebel (González Agapito, 1991). The first of these new settings was founded in 1905, replacing banks of seating with tables where children could play with sensory materials or games and covering the walls with paper so that they could draw all over them and , above all, allowing children to pursue their own interests (González Agapito, 1991).

It has been suggested that the early years provision in Catalonia during the first third of the twentieth century was amongst the best to be found across the whole of Spain at the time (González Agapito, 1991) it was a marked contrast to those voices that had been lamenting the dearth of settings and training in other parts of the country. The nurseries and kindergartens that were being founded also began to introduce the methods of Montessori as well as the Belgian educationalist Decroly, supported by a new conception of childhood that arose in conjunction with discoveries in developmental psychology that encouraged local authorities to create settings that served not just public need but also operated as centres for pedagogical research (González Agapito, 1991). Catalonia was able to carry this out under the auspices of the semi-devolved powers it held between 1914 and 1925 as the *Mancomunitat de Catalunya* (Commonwealth of Catalonia) (Costa Carreras & Yates, 2009). The theories of Montessori, who actually came to live in Barcelona for a while, and Decroly were viewed as more scientific (González Agapito, 1991) and thus more attractive to the *Noucentistes* , who took a much more disciplined approach than the *Modernistes* before them (Costa Carreras & Yates, 2009). Interestingly, it has been noted that some of the most representative architecture of the *Noucentisme* movement was that of schools (González Agapito, 1991), illustrating the idealism and importance placed upon these settings in building a better Catalonia.

The new ideas about childhood were also filtering into Catalan homes: in middle-class homes mothers were taking back the care of their children from the hired help and the last of the wet-nurses disappeared in the 1930s (González Agapito, 1991), almost two centuries after Rousseau (1762) had advocated the same in France. Though babies and children under three do not fall under the remit of this research project, it should be noted that the *casas-cuna* remained stuck in the previous century and remained viewed as a welfare service above all (González Agapito, 1991). Part of these changes was down to the simultaneous growth of the Catalan feminist movement, which interestingly had a strong conservative sector (González

Agapito, 1991). This sector, like so many aspects of Catalan culture, found itself needing to reconcile contradictions; in this case a demand for equal social status and education as men whilst endeavouring to value and modernize the roles of housewife and mother (González Agapito, 1991). Motherhood was seen as an educational role and this concept of women's roles became incorporated as an essential part of the wider national project, which led to the creation of specialized training for women in childcare and teaching (González Agapito, 1991).

These advances, being so closely connected to Catalan national identity, could not avoid causing problems politically. The Catalan nationalists were accused of using Montessori's techniques as an underhand method for indoctrinating Catholicism, humiliating Spanish teachers and offending Spain (González Agapito, 1991). In 1923, the General Primo de Rivera overthrew the Spanish Government in a military coup and embarked on a seven year dictatorship with his own plans for modernizing and uniting the country (Beevor, 2006). Catalan nationalism was absolutely not part of his plan, and it is said he took 'spiteful pleasure' in suppressing Catalan language and culture (Beevor, 2006). The identification of the progressive early years settings with Catalan nationalism thus resulted in the closure of the central school by the dictatorship, though in fact Montessori methods continued to flourish right up until 1935 (González Agapito, 1991).

The resignation of Primo de Rivera marked the beginning of a series of events that precipitated the beginning of the Spanish Civil War in 1936. In 1931 the Second Spanish Republic was declared as the King Alfonso XIII left the country, Catalan nationalism remained high on the agenda and a compromise was brokered whereby Catalonia would have a statute of autonomy yet still remain part of the Spanish Republic (Beevor, 2006). In terms of education, the Republic was highly secular in its ideology and sought to separate church and state, and there were vicious protests on both sides, yet this meant that obligatory religious education in educational settings, for so long a central feature, was suppressed (Beevor, 2006). When the war arrived and the Nationalists took control, the Catalan statute of autonomy was suspended immediately, and as has already been indicated, the campaign of reprisals against Republican foes took in teachers, some of whom were brutally murdered for teaching the reviled ideology of the previous ruling party (Beevor, 2006).

Catalonia, however, held off the Nationalist military until 1939 (Beevor, 2006) and lived through its own internal revolution alongside the fight against fascism and, naturally, education was viewed as a vital tool in this process (González Agapito, 1991). The voices of the leftists, the anarcho-syndicalists and the whole spectrum of those ideologies that were united

against the Nationalists in defence of their homeland can be heard in the cry for 'a new school, inspired by the rationalist principles of work and human fraternity ... by the universal sense of solidarity and in agreement with all the concerns of human society, built on a foundation of the suppression of all types of privilege.' (González Agapito, 1991: 149). In spite of the war around them, the Catalan *Consell de l'Escola Nova Unificada* (CENU) (Council of the New United School) was surprisingly modern in outlook: they sought true equality amongst the citizenship through equal provision to all children and the prohibition of a priori distinctions between children (González Agapito, 1991).

This system was also the first to include the *casas-cuna* into a framework of free, obligatory education, though it has been suggested that this was less for social progress rather than the conception of women had changed once again and were now taking on an important role in the militia (González Agapito, 1991). The importance of this change also manifested itself in the name of these settings: it had been common to refer to early years settings as *guarderías*, which implies a place to simply store or keep a child, but the CENU was determined that they should be called *escolas de bressols* and *escolas maternas* (cradle schools and maternal schools) (González Agapito, 1991), names which both highlight their status as specifically Catalan institutions and also their focus on education. The name *escola de bressols* actually persists in modern-day Catalonia, though they are not fully funded (Generalitat de Catalunya, no date) and as they cater for babies to three year olds, they did not form a part of the fieldwork for this research project.

The *escolas maternas* were strongly conditioned by the war and the social and cultural changes around them: there were debates about their role in protecting children from the environment of hate and violence around them in order to ensure that the next generation grew up to be peaceful and unified (González Agapito, 1991). They also had to deal with some of the inevitable consequences of war such as developmental delays caused by malnutrition and poor hygiene (González Agapito, 1991). In spite of the situation, new initiatives were still made, particularly for the under-threes, including new nurseries that were known as the *guarderías de la guerra* (War Nurseries) (González Agapito, 1991). Sadly, it was not to last, Catalonia fell to the Nationalists in 1939 and General Franco became recognised internationally as the head of Spain (Beevor, 2006). Aiming to unite the whole country under one culture and one government, Franco set about suppressing the use of the Catalan language and customs (Phillips & Rahn Phillips, 2010). This process of trying to 'de-catalanise' the country included the dismantling of the entire Catalan education system and oppressive

measures against Catalan teachers (González Agapito, 1991). In spite of this, a strain of cultural resistance developed alongside political resistance, certain *escuelas de parvulos*, which suffered less restriction than schools for older children, were discreetly using Montessori and other *escuela nueva* techniques, though naturally being careful to use the Castilian Spanish language as opposed to Catalan (González Agapito, 1991).

This state of affairs continued right up until the 1950s when Catalonia began to experience an upturn with its economy and industry and a consequent population increase as people from other areas of Spain arrived looking for work (Phillips & Rahn Phillips, 2010). Once again, women were required to integrate into the workforce, meaning that early years settings began to proliferate anew, enabled by the lack of legislation around them, though this very freedom meant that many of these settings were run by people with little or no training, particularly as teachers who had been associated with the old system did not want to be associated with this type of provision (González Agapito, 1991).

The Catholic Church had traditionally stood on the side of the nationalist and conservative factions throughout the preceding centuries and was particularly championed by the Franco regime (Beever, 2006; Phillips & Rahn Phillips, 2010). Yet by the 1950s, this relationship was no longer so clear: the Catalan church played a central role in the rebirth of Catalan pedagogy under Franco; these were progressive Catholics who viewed education as essential in the struggle against the dictatorship (González Agapito, 1991). Once again, the educators of this movement would declare themselves the heirs of Froebel, Montessori and Decroly and organized training for teachers, though it was not an officially recognised qualification, it brought about a level of quality provision in many settings that raised their status above those that were run purely as a business (González Agapito, 1991). This movement was given its greatest boost by the foundation of the Rosa Sensat school for teachers in 1965, which hoped to make up for the deficiencies in the training to be found in the *escuelas normales* and the University of Barcelona (Sureda, 2010). During this period, working groups, exchanges with foreign educators and professional journals were generated throughout the sector, yet once again the political idealism within the renovation provoked internal crises and schisms within the sector and patchy educational successes (González Agapito, 1991).

Much of these efforts became superfluous by 1970 with the advent of *La Ley General de la Educación*, which created an early years specialisation within national teacher training schemes and meant that for the first time in decades, educators who had been hiding away in private institutions could enter state provision once again and use that framework to put into

practice the new early years education (González Agapito, 1991). Almost four decades after taking power, Franco died in 1975 after a long illness, having already appointed Juan Carlos de Borbón to return to the throne of Spain and rule as King (Phillips & Rahn Phillips, 2010). Juan Carlos did not continue the authoritarian regime, however and began to dismantle the dictatorship, returning democracy to Spain and creating a constitutional monarchy (Phillips & Rahn Phillips, 2010). Yet another new era for Catalonia and its early years education was beginning.

The shape of early years education in Catalonia today is a consequence of these events: the Spanish Constitution of 1978 devolved power to each of the 17 autonomous communities that make up the country today (Phillips & Rahn Phillips, 2010). These countries share overarching legislation, but within these limits essentially govern themselves (Phillips & Rahn Phillips, 2010). For education, this means that while the central government sets out some basic requirements such as free education for the over threes and basic learning goals (e.g. Jefatura del Estado, 2006), it is the individual communities that decide how they will attain these goals and the exact nature of their curriculum content, including the language it is taught in (e.g. Departament d'Educació, 2008; Departament d'Educació, 2010). According to the documentation, early years education in Catalonia is recognised as a stage with its own identity that should develop children's relationships with themselves and others, discover and interpret the world around them, develop learning skills and a degree of autonomy, all of which should help them to form part of a society that has both multicultural and intercultural aspects (Departament d'Educació, 2008). It is maintained that early years provision in Catalonia today has, throughout its advances, retained its basis in those innovations in the early part of the 20th century with the *Escuela Nueva* and Montessori (Sureda, 2010). Catalan early years education for three to four years old is conducted in Catalan and in schools as part of an overarching education plan that extends throughout the course of a child's life, continuing the task of building a strong, modern, but ultimately Catalan nation.

### **Summation.**

Comparing these two stories, the evolution of early years education and attitudes towards cultivating creativity can be seen to have been moulded by some common threads, but also dramatically different ones. Similarities included early roots in religion and privilege (Gillard, 2011; Bartolomé Martínez, 1992), the impact of industrialisation (Baldock, Fitzgerald & Kay, 2005; Colmenar Orzaes, 2010) and of war (Baldock, Fitzgerald & Kay, 2005; González Agapito, 1991), the theories of renowned European theorists such as Froebel (Gillard, 2011; Colmenar

Orzaes, 2010) and a gradual move from a focus on care and life skills (Baldock, Fitzgerald & Kay, 2005; Ruiz Berrio, 2010) towards a more explicitly pedagogic approach that remains in place today (DfE, 2012a; Departament d'Educació, 2008). The greatest differences have been the results of the political and social upheaval endured by Catalonia that have meant a polarisation in political ideologies (Vilanou Torrano & Soler Mata, 2013); changes in which have impacted upon language, culture and even the safety of educators (Beavor, 2006). England, whether through luck, geography or disposition, has succeeded in escaping such upheavals and their attendant impacts upon education. In an attempt to distil meaning from these stories in regard to the project aims, this section considers the research questions and the clues that have been found to help answer them.

*What are the two national cultural perspectives regarding creativity in education?*

In the English chronology there appears to be a long ideological tradition of educationalists valuing, if not exactly creativity itself, then certainly the conditions that make creativity possible. This can be found in the trail-blazing work of Robert Owen (Owen, 1824) and persists in the modern curriculum (DfE, 2012a), which, though it does not explicitly state so, recognisably bears the traces of much early years education research from the last century. The views of educationalists have periodically found themselves in conflict with other priorities. The State, for example has often taken a more utilitarian outlook on the sector, seeing it as means to free up workers or as a form of social care (Baldock, Fitzgerald & Kay, 2005) or indeed as a preparatory stage for school and even work (Seccombe, 1993). The strength of these perspectives has fluctuated slightly, depending on prevailing ideology at the time: witness the investments in creativity and the early years by the Labour government of 1997 - 2012 (Craft, 2006). Current perspectives might be regarded as a collision between the two where defenders of children as 'beings' highlight the utilitarian value of creative play for later achievement (Too Much, Too Soon Campaign, no date) and the Government appears to recognise creativity as a cornerstone of effective practice (DfE, 2012a).

Conflicts persist in the Catalan perspectives around creativity and education too. Catalonia would appear to have had a wider tradition of educating very young children than England; beyond the demands of the economy, this tradition is intimately connected to the needs of a culture that has required regeneration again and again (Bartolomé Martínez, 1992; Britt Arredondo, 2005). Thus, unlike England, national identity has a greater impact upon its pedagogical choices than, say, industry. Yet like England, Catalonia's pedagogical choices have also been informed by educationalists such as Owen and Froebel, who implicitly or explicitly



encourage the cultivation of creativity (Owen, 1824; Froebel.org.uk, no date). The conflicts around creativity in education might be said to mirror the conflicts at the heart of a culture that is embedded in its concept of nation: reconciling tradition with modernity (González Agapito, 1991). Creativity has been championed as a means to advance the country, as in the *Modernisme* and *Noucentisme* movements (Costa Carreras & Yates, 2009), but by the same token, the *Catalanisme* (Mas, 2007; Eade, 2007) that permeates modern Catalan society and its institutions is one that is perhaps drawn more to conserving tradition than to innovation.

*What are the prevailing policy approaches to early years education and creativity in each country?*

Both countries have statutory guidance about the curriculum which bear the hallmarks of respected earlier pedagogies (e.g. Froebel.org, no date; Sureda, 2010) that have qualities that can be viewed as conducive to creativity when compared against Cremin et al.'s (2006) core features (in Craft, 2008). Thus *Posing Questions, Play, Immersion in a Loving Environment, Innovation, Being Imaginative, Self-determination and risk-taking* (Cremin et al., 2006 in Craft, 2008) may be viewed as conditions that are promoted by current policy in both countries. However, only the English curriculum is explicit in its recognition of creativity as a vital aspect of effective teaching and learning (DfE, 2012a). These curriculums will be explored in further detail in the exosystem. In the last 20 years, early years education in England has been the beneficiary of government policy for investment in cultivating creativity (e.g. Craft, 2006). This is no longer policy, yet even today early years teacher training is taking place in conjunction with charities and voluntary organisations that specialise in this area (e.g. WEAVE, 2015). There have been no such comparable policy approaches in Catalonia.

*How do these cultural and policy approaches translate to impact on the fostering of creativity in the early years setting?*

It is difficult to answer this question based on the data acquired through this method alone. These chronologies are able to tell us a little about what has occurred in the past, which at different points in both countries has included using creativity-friendly methods in the classroom such as those used in New Lanark (Owen, 1824) or more mechanical, rote-learning approaches (Kwon, 2002; Colmenar Orzaes, 2010). The evidence suggests that current discourse and policy, as demonstrated by the two curriculums (DfE, 2012a; Departament d'Educació, 2008), recommends that practice should provide the conditions for creativity to develop. However, this is more explicit in the English curriculum than in the Catalan one and there is no evidence as yet to prove how these approaches are currently affecting the fostering

of creativity in settings. It is hoped that triangulating these data with information retrieved through other methods later on might help to answer this question more effectively.

*What degrees of difference are there in the actual fostering of creativity in early years settings between the two countries?*

As with the preceding question, this is not really an area that this method can adequately address. In particular, this method has focused on the history of the sector and its relationship with creativity as opposed to what is happening now, therefore it provided no evidence that can be used to compare the two countries' actual fostering of creativity. It would appear from the evidence cited above (DfE, 2012a; Departament d'Educació, 2008) that in principal, the two countries' present intentions in this area are quite similar, though how that manifests will have to wait until the microsystem before a picture can be formed.

...

The data supplied in this section have gone some way to unfolding the story of creativity and early years education in each country. These chronologies have provided evidence of a long pedagogical patrimony in both countries that has often emphasised practice that is conducive towards the cultivation of creativity. Nevertheless, such approaches have not been consistent, sometimes confined to certain types of setting, perhaps supplanted or discontinued owing to societal or political change. England and Catalonia have several plotlines in common throughout their stories, but their greatest influences are different: England seems more motivated by the economy, Catalonia by national identity.



### **Macrosystem – mise en scène.**

Where the chronosystem provides us with a back-story, an idea of how the early years education systems and their approaches to creativity have evolved into their current state, the macrosystem explores the extant beliefs and values of the culture, which here will be concerned with creativity. It has been noted in preceding sections that currently creativity has become part of the international zeitgeist surrounding economic achievement and recovery, this section examines those attitudes in more depth within each country. This is important to the aims of this study because it is held by many researchers that creativity and culture are

indivisible: a fairly recent study for the European Commission explores this very relationship, contending that: 'Culture is the general expression of humanity, the expression of its creativity. Culture is linked to meaning, knowledge, talents, industries, civilisation and values.' (KEA European Affairs, 2009: 2). Therefore the beliefs and values of a culture will shape how creativity will manifest and be nurtured.

A cursory look at England today seems to suggest that a concept such as English or British values has traditionally been rather more nebulous or of lesser importance than the idea of Catalan values has been in the construction of the state of Catalonia. There are some who believe that this is a recent phenomenon, and the result of a plot to deliberately undermine 'Britishness' through mass immigration (Heffer, Wednesday 22<sup>nd</sup> February 2012), whereas others attribute it to a post-war lack of confidence in our national capabilities (Brown, 2004). However, there is evidence to suggest that the origins of this situation stretch back much further than this. There is a telling quote from G.K. Chesterton (1917: 96) that '... the Englishman was never so English as when he was outside England,' which underlines how the expression of Englishness was really only considered of use as a unifier when the Englishman was far away from home. Ironically for this research project, such manifestations of expatriate Englishness may be seen throughout the coastal towns of Catalonia in pubs called the Queen Vic that serve imported beer and fry-ups to sunburned Brits.

Yet it is interesting to note that recent concerns about extremism in the United Kingdom have resulted in calls for the propagation of British values back at home, particularly in nursery schools, to try to combat such threats to our society (Adams, Friday 8<sup>th</sup> August 2014). It must be noted that these values are definitely 'British', not 'English', perhaps in an attempt to be more inclusive or to avoid the taint of association with far-right groups such as the English Defence League. The responses to this plan have raised some valid concerns that British values for any age are elusive and indeed whether there is any British monopoly on such values such as democracy and liberty (Adams, Friday 8<sup>th</sup> August 2014). This scenario rather begs the question: are there any particularly British or English values? What does it mean to be English and how does that national character impact on the fostering of creativity?

This present lack of coherence about British values could well stem from the structure of British society itself. This is not to focus on how immigration has changed the face of society over the years as may be assumed, but to look at an issue that goes back even further: social hierarchy and class. Unlike Spain and many other countries, there was never a revolution in the United Kingdom that aimed to bring about social equality; instead there have been

incremental changes over the centuries. John Prescott did famously declare in 1997 that 'we are all middle-class now' (BBC News, 2007) but even today we are aware of the enormous gap between the super-rich and the poverty-stricken, as evidenced by the recent 'poor-door' scandal uncovered in London (Osborne, Friday 25<sup>th</sup> July 2014). In fact, there have always been social codes, values and standards in British society, but these have usually only been applied to certain sections of society. There are, of course, recurrent values that surface in times of crisis, usually war, that are usually applied to the fighting men and are usually embodied as duty and honour as in the famous last signal from Nelson: 'England expects every man to do his duty!' (Southey, 1813: 200). Even so, the qualities that the ideal British serviceman was supposed to embody such as bravery, calmness and integrity were usually only represented in popular culture by people from the upper ranks and, with England as the dominant country in the Kingdom, particularly by the English. The character of the airman Biggles (Johns, 1959) was one particularly well-known example of this archetype. For a certain type of Englishman then, British values may have been considered as interchangeable with their own, though perhaps other citizens, and indeed the other countries of the UK, might not agree.

The strongest notion of British values and beliefs would then appear to have traditionally been associated with the idea of the English gentleman. It has been noted that these values were perhaps most strongly personified by those upper-class, male passengers who refused to take places in the Titanic lifeboats until all the women and children had gone (Berberich, 2007). However, bravery was only part of this, it was part of a 'right' way of doing things that included morals, transactions, manners, behaviour and even dress; those gentlemen on the Titanic were said to have dressed in their best to go down with the ship (Berberich, 2007). It is debatable how selfless such actions really were, if the performance of the action ensured the maintenance of one's social status: perhaps death was a fair price to pay for ensuring that your family will never be tainted by association with cowardice or dereliction of duty. These ideals did not preclude being creative, a great many texts show the character of the gentleman as an artist or a writer, but their creativity carried the hallmarks of the 'right' way, looking backwards to cherished ideals (Berberich, 2007). G.K. Chesterton (1917) also pointed out that much that was held to represent the values of this class of great and good gentlemen was a lie: though publically professing to uphold liberty and patriotism, these people were descended from, and continued to be, those who took away the liberty of others and were dividing the country into haves and have-nots. Rightly, more modern commentators such as Berberich (2007) pick up on these contradictions, but also identify the idea of the English gentleman as outmoded. After

all, in a post-immigration, post-feminism society, how relevant are the values represented by a figure who exemplifies so few of the citizens?

So, if traditional English values are outmoded, hypocritical and irrelevant; are there any values that unite the culture today? Gordon Brown explored this question in his speech at the British Council annual lecture in 2004. He was addressing the issue from an economic perspective, but concerned that economic success should be tempered and allied with a shared sense of national purpose, believing that it is united aims that give a nation the strength to face change (Brown, 2004). He suggested that in spite of political and other differences there was a 'golden thread' that runs through British history, representing a core of shared values (Brown, 2004). Brown (2004) identifies that citizens of the United Kingdom have long held plural identities: an Englishman and a Cornishman may own their specific identities yet are simultaneously British, just as in more recent times it is possible to be Pakistani-British or Caribbean British. Of course this has recently been called into question particularly with the referendum regarding independence in Scotland, which was rejected by a narrow margin. This duality of being is in marked contrast to Catalonia, in spite of its immigrant communities (Eaude, 2007), and manifests itself in all sorts of quotidian ways: take country-code domain names used in web-addresses, all over the United Kingdom the suffix '.uk' is commonly used, yet Catalan sites do not use the '.es' of Spain, they use '.cat'. As the graffiti says: Catalonia is not Spain. These different approaches to identity may have an impact on the fostering of creativity. It became clear from reading the literature around creativity and educational history that there is a clearly defined Catalan way to be, to think and to educate (e.g. González Agapito, 1991; Pujols, 2012; Ruiz, 2008), which has no real parallel in England.

The existence of this precept raises a very interesting question: does creativity need freedom or constraint in order to be able to flourish? With much of the vocabulary around creativity including such words as 'opportunity', 'explore' and 'possibility' it may well seem that absolute freedom is required, however, it has been pointed out by researchers such as Howard Gardner (2006) that while a progressive style of education may be a wonderful thing, there is nothing worse than a progressive education done badly, that is one without a firm grounding. Gardner (2006) was talking about basic skills and methods, but equally this could apply to ideas and ways of thinking. Perhaps if you have a strong framework to begin with, you have material you can change and adapt. This point of view is one which is certainly agreed with by some researchers such as Johnson-Laird (1988) who says that cultural practices can encourage the crystallization of artistic and scientific models by building on the ones that went before. This

mirrors the Cartesian idea that we cannot imagine anything that does not exist in some way (Descartes, 1637 & 1644). Yet on the other hand, there is an equally strong suggestion from other quarters that there is a danger of placing too much emphasis on outcome: Bruce (2011) and Gardner (2006) both highlight that the experimental process of creativity is as important as the product, which may suggest there could be a detrimental effect to confining creativity within a structure.

Brown (2004) highlighted that our maritime history has made us particularly outward-looking, open and adaptable. This may well be the case, though the same could be said for Catalonia, which once ruled an empire of its own comprising of most of the coastal areas around the Mediterranean (Eaude, 2007). Indeed, the Catalans themselves refer to their country as a *terra de pas*, which means a place through which things pass and naturally leave their traces (Eaude, 2007). In the earlier chapter 'Literature Review – Leading the Way' under the question 'What is creativity?' this thesis looked at the suggestion of Csikszentmihalyi (1999) that external influence is very important in allowing creativity to flourish within a culture as it is the exposure to diversity that allows memes to change. It could be argued, however, that these influences have been experienced differently. They were certainly temporally different, as Catalonia had lost its own empire by the end of the Middle Ages (Eaude, 2007), whereas the legacy of the British Empire may still be seen in the Commonwealth countries. The scale of the two empires was also vastly different, though the range of influences that were to enter Catalonia widened as the Castilian crown allowed Catalonia to participate in its own imperial trade with the Americas (Eaude, 2007). Brown (2004) makes an explicit connection between this openness and creativity in his speech, whereas Catalan thinking from Pujols (2012) at the turn of the previous century to Artur Mas (2007), the current President of Catalonia finds their creativity to be something intrinsic, a product of their language and heritage.

These two perspectives almost mirror the nature/nurture debate: is creativity an innate quality or is it a product of experience? Csikszentmihalyi (1999) would appear to disagree with the first suggestion, though Gardner (2006) would suggest that creativity is innate to everyone, but how it is expressed may vary according to the preferred intelligences of the individual, how they may exercise these qualities and of course, how creativity is fostered. Catalonia may prioritise their cultural identity in the creative process, but their history shows that external influences have taken place and though Englishness or Britishness in itself may not be viewed as essentially creative, the legacy of innovation in art, design, science and popular culture would appear to suggest a strong propensity towards it.

Liberty is another quality that Brown (2004) identifies as being particularly British. This is a concept that many nations have built themselves upon, particularly those newer ones such as modern France and the United States of America, often as a rallying cry to free the masses from the oppressive regimes that preceded them. In this sense, it seems that the concept of liberty differs in England and Catalonia, as a result of their different pasts. Brown's (2004) vision of liberty is one of individual freedom and tolerance for others, whereas liberty, or *llibertat*, in Catalonia is still a rallying cry for those who wish to become independent from Spain e.g. *llibertat.cat* – a website for the leftist independents. According to the Global Creativity Index (Florida et al., 2011), Brown's (2004) identification of liberty/tolerance as a national characteristic would have a substantial effect on whether creativity will flourish. It is one of the three criteria that they use to assess the potential for sustainable prosperity (Florida et al., 2011) because, like Csikszentmihalyi (1999), they recognise that openness to others means openness to new and different ideas and ways of doing things as well as attracting a broad range of people that can enrich the talent pool (Florida et al., 2011).

Artur Mas (2007) identifies tolerance as one of the civic virtues of the Catalans, though some commentators note that there has historically been a mismatch between Catalan self-perception as being more tolerant than other, more insular regions such as the Basque country and their actual treatment of migrants from other parts of Spain and abroad (Eaude, 2007). Such people have often been treated as a means to feed Catalan prosperity as opposed to being allowed to participate in it (Eaude, 2007). It should also be noted that distinctly intolerant threads run through certain sections of British media and politics, as evidenced by anti-multicultural commentators such as Simon Heffer (Wednesday 22<sup>nd</sup> February 2012). That being said, immigrants have flocked to, and continue to arrive in both countries in search of a better future and according to the World Values Survey (2005-2009), both countries rank in the top tier for self-reported tolerance of others.

In terms of liberty as personal freedom, Brown (2004) suggests that this has meant a deeply rooted belief in the liberty of every individual, including the very poorest. It is debatable how deeply rooted this belief may be in British history when one considers feudalism and slavery, though it is possible that the examples of British-based liberty Brown (2004) cites such as the 1689 Bill of Rights may have led to a society that may have offered greater individual liberty than was experienced in Catalonia at the same time. It was not until the political revolutions of the early nineteenth century that Catalan society was really able to break the grip of land-owning aristocracy and became the setting for what has been termed 'the world's biggest

anarchist movement' (Eaude, 2007). Did a comparatively less oppressive state in England mean that a social revolution, such as those experienced across the globe in the last few hundred years, was simply less necessary?

Catalonia today prides itself on a sense of justice and solidarity (Mas, 2007). These feelings, along with liberty as a national rather than individual state, point towards a rather more collective approach to society where it could be argued that the British sensibility is more individualistic. This is not necessarily to say that the British are selfish: perhaps it stems from a sense of justice in which the plight of the individual is recognised more than that of the group. Where the Catalan perspective is one of fellow feeling, could the British be more concerned that everyone should have a fair crack of the whip? This would appear to connect strongly with another value that Brown (2004) highlights: that of fair play. In terms of what this means for creativity, again it is difficult to favour one approach over the other. While self-determination is clearly advocated by researchers as an essential part of the process (e.g. Cremin et al., 2006 in Craft, 2008) the role of community and culture in developing creativity is also recognized as integral (Csikszentmihalyi, 1999).

Brown (2004) considers duty to be another of the particularly British values; he links this quality to the sense of liberty by saying that the sense of personal freedom is tempered with a sense of personal responsibility. Brown (2004) suggests that this quality may arise owing to a range of prompts, whether religious, a sense of *noblesse oblige* or a feeling of solidarity, duty to one another. This last motivation is a value that Catalans particularly prize, but beyond that is a sense that duty and the fulfilment of it is essential to the progress of their nation, a means to gain the respect and support of others (Mas, 2007). That is to say that rather than use the guns and bombs favoured by the Basque militants, and indeed Catalan anarchist almost a century ago (Beever, 2006), the modern Catalan state wishes to be recognised for its integrity, its ability to keep its promises. For Brown (2004), it was this sense of duty that built the great institutions of Britain today, from the founding of the guilds and eventual municipal provision of libraries and other amenities. This process is replicated in the growth of early years education in the United Kingdom from Robert Owen's sense of duty towards eradicating the 'poverty and vice and misery' of the children of his workers (Owen, 1824) through to the subsidised 570 hours available to each three to four year old today (DfE, 2014).

In Catalonia, where that sense of duty is integral to the growth of the nation, the effect on early years education has been even more powerful; as the previous section highlighted, education has been viewed as essential to the construction of modern Catalonia (González



Agapito, 1991), thus early years education for three to four year olds is largely provided and run by the state (Generalitat de Catalunya, no date). Out of the values explored so far, it may appear that duty has the least relevance regarding the cultivation of creativity, however in consideration of how an education system is run, duty is a commitment to doing things correctly, and if creativity is considered to be important to a child's education, a sense of duty will help to ensure that it is facilitated, to attempt to narrow Carr's (1980) gap between theory and practice.

It is tricky to assess precisely how these cultural values have impacted upon the fostering of creativity in children; there do not appear to be any large-scale data available in this area, though there are several sources that purport to measure the creativity of nations. The most recognisable of these is probably the Global Creativity Index (Florida et al., 2011) with its holistic measurements not only of technological capacity, but also of talent and tolerance in the country. According to their measurements, the UK is rated at 13<sup>th</sup> place and Spain at 17<sup>th</sup>, which considering these places are out of 90, is really quite close (Florida et al., 2011). However, there are no figures for either England or Catalonia within their composite nations so it is difficult to establish what each country's contribution is to that whole. Within each marker, the countries score quite differently: in terms of Technology, the UK comes in at 18 and Spain at 24; Talent puts the UK 19 and Spain 28; Tolerance places the UK at 10 and Spain at 6 (Florida et al., 2011). The problem with asking how well either of these cultures may foster creativity in young children is one of timing: we would need to wait 20 years to say definitively that yes, the culture that surrounded these children helped or hindered them in the expression of their creativity.

Yet these scores from the GCI do offer some suggestions about where each country might need to focus their educational aims. Clearly, both cultures have been fairly successful in promoting tolerance in their societies, though this will need to be maintained in the face of popular anti-immigration rhetoric if it is to continue. Technology is a big stumbling block for both countries; it has been argued that education needs to change if it is to adequately equip children for the world of today and of tomorrow (e.g. Kress, 2003; Robinson, 2001). This includes a greater emphasis on technology, whether that means embracing the screen for a more relevant approach to literacy (Kress, 2003), using technology in the class room as a tool to engage student's interest and to show different types of representation from different perspectives (Gardner, 2006), or providing children with the practical skills that will enable children to make their own technological advance, such as coding, which industry leaders such

as Google's Eric Schmidt view as essential (Schmidt, 2011). Working on these areas would have effects both immediately at the bottom end of the scale as children are equipped with skills through which they may channel their creativity, but also nationally as technological capability is enhanced, increasing creative potential. Talent can also be acutely affected by education. Though the word in itself suggests innate ability, as many researchers have pointed out, creativity is innate to us all (e.g. Winnicott, 1971; Robinson, 2001); the problem, as Gardner (2006) points out, lies in how education allows children's particular intelligences to express themselves creatively. It was in this area that the greatest disparity between the UK and Spain was found, perhaps there is something each education system is doing differently that might account for this gap.

### **Summation.**

In focusing upon values and beliefs extant in each culture, this method cannot supply explicit answers to these research questions, which explicitly refer to early years education. It does, however provide some clues about what the answers to these questions are likely to be that can be triangulated with data from the other methods. Much like the previous method, the documents examined revealed both similarities and differences within their cultural make-up. Both countries have a long tradition of both invasion and colonisation from both ends of the equation (Brown 2004; Eade, 2007) and believe themselves to uphold similar values including liberty, tolerance, duty and openness (Brown 2004; Mas, 2007) though they might interpret them in different ways. As highlighted in the previous section, perspectives on creativity are coloured by very different outlooks: England or Britain looks outwards for creativity (Brown, 2004), whereas Catalonia believes it to be found within itself (Mas, 2007).

### *What are the two national cultural perspectives regarding creativity in education?*

As the above paragraph states, this section cannot supply explicit evidence about cultural perspectives on creativity in education. It can, however, draw out some inferences, the unwitting information that Robson (1993) indicates can be so revealing. Views from both countries appear to celebrate each nation's creativity (Brown, 2004; Mas, 2007): observing this, it could be surmised that perhaps each country might also value creativity in education as a means to sustain their achievements. The chronosystem certainly indicated that the English government does do, though this was less explicit from the Catalan documents.

*What are the prevailing policy approaches to early years education and creativity in each country?*

Both countries appear to prize a sense of duty, of responsibility to their fellow citizens (Brown, 2004; Mas, 2007), from this it could be inferred that if fostering children's creativity is viewed as the right thing to do, then both countries would be likely to do so. Given that England appears to share Csikszentmihalyi's (1999) view that creativity results from exposure to new and different experiences (Brown, 2004) and that Catalonia appears to favour the notion that it is innate, wrapped up in their identity (Pujols, 2012; Mas, 2007), it might be expected that English policy might be more explicit about providing those experiences than similar Catalan documents. This point would appear to be corroborated by evidence from the last section, but the extent to which this is true will need to be examined more carefully in the exosystem data from the following section.

*How do these cultural and policy approaches translate to impact on the fostering of creativity in the early years setting?*

This section has nothing to say regarding what might be happening within early years settings right now. It may however be inferred from looking at the data supplied by the Global Creativity Index (Florida et al., 2011) that the systems that have been in use over the last few decades may have been reasonably effective as the UK and Spain (of which England and Catalonia are the greatest economic contributors) were places 13<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> respectively out of 90 countries. Nonetheless, these data are based on the adult populations (Florida et al., 2011) and though early years education in both countries does not appear to have changed that dramatically since the 1990s, it cannot be said to reflect the results of current practice.

*What degrees of difference are there in the actual fostering of creativity in early years settings between the two countries?*

As above, there is little that can be said about what is actually happening in these settings, though if the data from the GCI were to be used in trying to answer this question, it could be suggested that perhaps early years education in England has been slightly more effective in this area than the Catalan system (Florida et al., 2011). Looking at the markers used by the GCI to measure creativity, there was a significant difference in the manifestation of Talent between the two countries (Florida et al., 2011). This could suggest that so far, the Catalan system has not been as effective in nurturing children's talents, which might provide them with an outlet for creative expression.

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Although this section has not been able to provide much in the way of explicit answers to the research questions, it has been able to gather much background material on the two countries' values and beliefs. When these data were applied to the matter of creativity and the research questions above, they began to reveal hints and suggestions about how each country may have ended up with the approach to fostering creativity in early years education that it has. As in the preceding section, the data show a strong difference in perspective on the subject matter: Catalonia believes creativity to spring from within itself, England seeks inspiration from outside.



### **Exosystem – the storytakers.**

At this level of the ecological system around the child and the cultivation of their creativity are the influences of the economy, politics, policy and curriculum (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). These areas have a more concrete say in what actually will take place in early years settings and how they are run and subsidised. As highlighted at the beginning of Chapter 2, the world is still recovering from the effects of the financial crisis of 2007/2008, which may have precipitated the move away from socialist governance in both the UK and Spain. According to the Second Quarterly Economic Survey this year, recovery in the UK is progressing well with export and investment balances are above their pre-recession levels, however, the economy is yet to be adequately rebalanced and still risks stalling (British Chambers of Commerce, 2014). Similar reports from Spain, which suffered the effects of the recession to a much greater degree, suggest that their economy is not likely to recover until 2017 and unemployment is likely to remain above 15% into 2019 (Sérvulo González, 21<sup>st</sup> February 2014). Though figures from Catalan sources indicate that the recovery has been consolidated in Catalonia itself (Cambra de Comerç de Barcelona, 2013), public spending on areas such as education is controlled by central government (Generalitat de Catalunya, 2014). Consequently, both countries' early years education systems will still be affected by measures that have been undertaken by each government to try to mitigate the effects of the crash.

The effect of the Spanish economy on Catalan education is complicated: Catalonia accounts for 19.2% of the total revenue for central government, yet in return only receives 14% of State expenditure (Generalitat de Catalunya, 2014). Over recent years, the central government has

introduced a series of cuts to public expenditure, part of which was an obligation for the autonomous communities to adjust student/teacher ratios (La Moncloa, 2012); though this has yet to be made law, it has had a direct impact on early years education. Spanish law decrees that in primary school, which includes nursery classes, there should be no more than 25 children in a classroom and that classroom will be run by one teacher, though they may be assisted, and these ratios decrease if there are children with additional needs (Jefatura del Estado, 2006). Two nursery classes in Catalonia were visited in the course of this research project (see microsystem section for full description), one of which was run by one teacher with 25 children in her care. She explained that she had previously been assisted in her work by another member of staff; but that funding cuts meant that the school could no longer afford this (Interview with Profesora A - Lloc B, 2013).

Teachers across Spain may be either hired staff or civil servants (Jefatura del Estado, 2006) with control and regulation of civil servants being the responsibility of central government, who in 2012 declared that no civil servant would receive their annual December payment along with further cuts (Jefatura del Estado, 2006), leading to significant bad feeling and protests (Cooper & agencies, Friday 13<sup>th</sup> July 2012). Such a state of affairs has led to a sense of injustice in the Catalan state, a feeling that the Spanish state is not meeting the needs of Catalonia and therefore prompting calls for independence (Departament de la Presidència, 2014). In the schools and their nursery classes visited for this project, this has led to a feeling of despondency, with teachers and their assistants citing the difficulty caused by the lack of adults in the classroom to make space to be creative (Interview with Profesora A - Lloc B, 2013), something that will be explored in further detail in the meso- and microsystems.

The state of the UK economy in recent years has impacted differently upon the early years sector in this country, perhaps because it is not fully state-subsidised. However, The Department for Education did seek to relax adult/child ratios in nursery schools (Preschool Learning Alliance, 2013), which currently stand at 1:8 for 3-4 year olds unless the adult is an Early Years Professional or a Qualified Teacher, in which case it is 1:13 (DfE, 2012a). However, these plans were abandoned after a significant backlash and petitioning from practitioners, parents and academics (Preschool Learning Alliance, 2013). Since 2010, all three to four year olds in England have been eligible for fifteen hours of state-funded education per week, which current figures suggest has led to a take up of 96% (Department for Education/HM Treasury, 2014). In spite of this provision, the National Day Nurseries Association (NDNA, 2013) reported that one in three nurseries were only breaking even or were loss-making; the nursery sector

had shrunk by three percent between 2008 and 2012 and there was limited growth in new nurseries. The NDNA (2013) also highlighted that changes by the new Tory-led coalition Government to tax credits put pressure on low to middle-income parents, impacting on the affordability of nursery fees, which in turn influence the wage policies of nurseries. This situation was found by the NDNA (2013) to have had a direct impact upon the provision nurseries were able to offer: they simply had less money available for higher-qualified staff that would need to be paid more.

Such a problem is less of an issue for fully subsidised nurseries such as Setting A, which was visited for this research project. However, traditionally the early years sector in the UK relies on a great deal of provision from the private and voluntary sectors (Pugh, 2006), much like Setting B. Setting A has several qualified teachers working for them where Setting B only has one member of staff with an equivalent qualification (see Appendix B for setting profiles). In terms of fostering creativity, these issues are problematic as it is established that staff must be well-qualified and skilled to ensure good outcomes in general (DfE, 2012a): Carr (1980) suggests that in order to close the gap between theory and practice, it is necessary for the practitioner to be able to interpret and evaluate theory, skills which he highlights can only be developed through a good grounding in theoretical and professional studies. Staff with lower levels of professional training may simply not have the knowledge and skills to be able to foster creativity effectively, regardless of how they may perceive it.

In terms of educational policy, early years education in both countries is non-compulsory (NFER, 2013), it is free for all three to four year olds in Spain during school hours, which works out at about 18 hours a week, and subsidised up to 15 hours per week in England (Jefatura del Estado, 2006; Department for Education/ HM Treasury, 2014). As highlighted earlier, there is a take-up of around 96% for English children (Department for Education/HM Treasury, 2014) and 95.2% in Catalonia (Ministerio de Educación, Cultura y Deporte, 2013). In Spain, central government specifies a basic curriculum and administers inspections across the whole territory (Jefatura del Estado, 2006), responsibility is then devolved to the administrations of the Autonomous Communities such as Catalonia, who produce their own early years curriculums in much greater detail (e.g. Departament d'Educació, 2008). In the UK, each component country has its own curriculum and inspection body, which in England is the Early Years Foundation Stage and Ofsted (DfE, 2012a).

Whether creativity is emphasised within the curriculum is then very much down to the government of each country, and as established in the chapter on the literature, each

document approaches the subject in different ways. There are also elements of practice that simply do not crossover – in the Catalan schools, for example, it is commonplace for an activity called 'psicomotricidad' (psychomotricity) to take place, and indeed terminology from this field is incorporated into the curriculum (Departament d'Educació, 2008). This practice was developed by a French educationalist called Bernard Aucouturier, who describes it as 'a concept of psychological development which refers to the somatopsychic<sup>2</sup> development of the human being in relation to the environment. Psychomotricity acknowledges the complexity of the development of the human being' (Aucouturier, 2003: 1). Essentially, the practice is concerned with understanding the implications of young children's physical abilities for other areas of their development and aims to foster symbolic-representative abilities, develop emotional resilience through the pleasure of play and movement and to favour the development of muscle tone and emotional awareness (Aucouturier, 2003). This practice seems to reflect Montesino's interpretation of physical education in his approach to Catalan early years education two centuries previously. Timetabled sessions in both the Catalan settings were set apart for this activity, which included an array of different physical co-ordination exercises for the children to carry out.

Practice in England is grounded in play, particularly free-flow play, which although not directly identified in the curriculum, is implied by the instruction that practice should consist of a mix of adult-led and child-initiated activity and by the recognition that children learn by leading their own play (DfE, 2012a). Bruce (1991, in Lindon, 2001) defines free-flow play as being able to 'wallow' in the chosen activity, having the opportunity to apply and develop skills. The Catalan document acknowledges the importance of play for learning, but in organising activities for children, it states that teachers should plan around children's rhythms of work, rest and play (Departament d'Educació, 2008), suggesting that play is viewed as part of learning, though not learning in its entirety, which requires some work. This difference in ethos is immediately obvious upon walking into the settings from each country: the English settings are laid out with a series of areas where children may access a range of different resources and activities whereas the Catalan settings are literally classrooms where children sit at their place and carry out the activities they are given.

This is not to say that they do not play at all: they are given outdoor play-times, and both the nursery classes visited had access to a separate area that was set out with role-play

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<sup>2</sup>Aucouturier (2003): 'it refers to the influence of the body on the mind; in contraposition to psychosomatic.'

equipment, in appearance much more like an English nursery. Activities in this area (timetabled in once a week) were referred to as 'racons' (corners). This is a reference to a particular type of early childhood practice where classrooms are organized into areas where children are able to access activities in groups or as individuals and is based on freedom of choice, investigation and discovery (Torio López, 1997). Such a practice sounds very similar to that in English settings, though in the Catalan settings visited, it appeared that only a part of the approach had been used, restricting the activity to one type and one period of time, rather than being embraced as a teaching methodology in itself.

The tables on the following pages offer an outline of the educational elements of the two curriculums. Though each document separates out key areas, both are careful to emphasise that all areas are important and interconnected (Departament d'Educació, 2008; DfE, 2012a), however, the Early Years Foundation Stage seems to contradict this by implying a hierarchy in the division of the areas of learning and development into 'prime' and 'specific' areas, the second of which are to be used to strengthen and apply the prime areas (DfE, 2012a).

#### Decret 181/2008.

Capacitats (Capacities)	Objectius (Objectives)	Àrees (Areas)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Autonomy.</li> <li>- Thinking and communicating .</li> <li>- Discovery and initiative.</li> <li>- Coexistence and living in the world.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Self-knowledge and care.</li> <li>- Social skills.</li> <li>- Participation in diverse groups, habits, attitudes and rules.</li> <li>- Learning with and through others, integration in a group.</li> <li>- Observe and experience the environment.</li> <li>- Recognising stories, experiences and symbols connected to Catalonia, understanding and respecting those of others.</li> <li>- Representing daily life, real or imagined.</li> <li>- Understand the communication of others, adults or children.</li> <li>- Develop communicative, expressive, comprehension and representative abilities through a range of media.</li> <li>- Learn and enjoy learning, thinking and creating, questioning, doing things well, accept and use criticism, and increase knowledge in a structured way.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <b>Self-discovery and the discovery of others.</b> <i>Self-knowledge and emotional development. Play and movement. Progressive organization of laterality<sup>3</sup>. Personal and relational autonomy.</i></li> <li>- <b>Discovery of the environment.</b> <i>Exploration of the environment. Experience and representation. Reasoning and representation.</i></li> <li>- <b>Communication and languages.</b> <i>Observe, listen and experience. Speak, express and communicate. Interpret, represent, create.</i></li> </ul>

Table 1 - Adapted from: Departament d'Educació (2008).

<sup>3</sup> A concept connected to psychomotricity.



## Early Years Foundation Stage.

Overarching Principles	Learning and Development Requirements	Characteristics of Effective Teaching and Learning.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>every child is a <b>unique child</b>, who is constantly learning and can be resilient, capable, confident and self-assured;</li> <li>children learn to be strong and independent through <b>positive relationships</b>;</li> <li>children learn and develop well in <b>enabling environments</b>, in which their experiences respond to their individual needs and there is a strong partnership between practitioners and parents and/or carers; and</li> <li><b>children develop and learn in different ways and at different rates</b>. The framework covers the education and care of all children in early years provision, including children with special educational needs and disabilities.</li> </ul>	<p>Areas of Learning and Development:</p> <p>The <i>prime</i> areas, are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>communication and language;</li> <li>physical development;</li> <li>personal, social and emotional development.</li> </ul> <p>The specific areas are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>literacy;</li> <li>mathematics;</li> <li>understanding the world; and</li> <li>expressive arts and design.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>playing and exploring</b> - children investigate and experience things, and 'have a go';</li> <li><b>active learning</b> - children concentrate and keep on trying if they encounter difficulties, and enjoy achievements; and</li> <li><b>creating and thinking critically</b> - children have and develop their own ideas, make links between ideas, and develop strategies for doing things.</li> </ul>
	<p>The Early Learning Goals:</p> <p><b><i>Communication and language</i></b></p> <p>Listening and attention.</p> <p>Understanding.</p> <p>Speaking.</p> <p><b><i>Physical development</i></b></p> <p>Moving and handling.</p> <p>Health and self-care.</p> <p><b><i>Personal, social and emotional development</i></b></p> <p>Self-confidence and self-awareness.</p> <p>Managing feelings and behaviour.</p> <p>Making relationships.</p>	

	<p><b>The specific areas</b></p> <p><b><i>Literacy</i></b></p> <p>Reading.</p> <p>Writing.</p> <p><b><i>Mathematics</i></b></p> <p>Numbers.</p> <p>Shape, space and measures.</p> <p><b><i>Understanding the world</i></b></p> <p>People and communities.</p> <p>The world.</p> <p>Technology.</p> <p><b><i>Expressive arts and design</i></b></p> <p>Exploring and using media and materials.</p> <p>Being imaginative.</p>	
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**Table 2 - Adapted from: Department for Education (2012).**

The Catalan document only explicitly refers to creativity once, and that is in reference to the skills that need to be cultivated for artistic representation, which is considered an aspect of Communication and Languages, under Interpret, Represent and Create (Departament d'Educació, 2008). The English document, however, does not use the term 'creativity' at all, though it does give 'creating and thinking critically' as one of its characteristics of effective teaching and learning (DfE, 2012a). Though neither document directly states that it is their intention to cultivate creativity, they have both clearly identified it as important to the learning process to some extent. Interestingly, both curriculums appear to manifest all of Cremin et al.'s (2006 in Craft, 2008) core features of learners' and teachers' engagement. Here are some examples of how both documents encourage each feature:

core features	Decret 181/2008	Early Years Foundation Stage
<b>Posing questions</b>	<p><i>Curiosity and initiative for discovery, to make questions.</i></p> <p><i>... to promote the posing of questions, guiding the answers to questions.</i></p>	<p><i>They listen to stories, accurately anticipating key events and respond to what they hear with relevant comments, questions or actions.</i></p> <p><i>They answer 'how' and 'why' questions about their experiences and in response to stories or events.</i></p>
<b>Play</b>	<p><i>... to promote play as a natural activity for children of this stage, which will allow them to integrate spontaneous action with emotions and thought, favouring personal and social development .</i></p>	<p><i>Play is essential for children's development, building their confidence as they learn to explore, to think about problems, and relate to others. Children learn by leading their own play, and by taking part in play which is guided by adults.</i></p>
<b>Immersion</b>	<p><i>At this stage it is essential that girls and boys feel they have a place in their environment that they can trust; this needs to accommodate them and accept them fully with love, know them and understand them with respect and affection, ensure trusting relationships and create bonds with the adults and peers around them.</i></p>	<p><i>Children learn best when they are healthy, safe and secure, when their individual needs are met, and when they have positive relationships with the adults caring for them.</i></p>
<b>Innovation</b>	<p><i>... providing materials, resources and strategies to help make connections through the different languages and make conscious experiences.</i></p>	<p><i>They develop their own narratives and explanations by connecting ideas or events.</i></p>
<b>Being Imaginative</b>	<p><i>Using intuition, improvisation, imagination and creativity in both observation and listening as well as the artistic creative process.</i></p>	<p><i>... children use what they have learnt about media and materials in original ways, thinking about uses and purposes. They represent their own ideas, thoughts and feelings through design and technology, art, music, dance, role-play and stories.</i></p>
<b>Self-determination and risk-taking</b>	<p><i>Gradually acquire habits of independence in basic daily activities of daily living, performing them safely and effectively.</i></p> <p><i>Children must perceive and feel that they are able to learn and have new interests. They must feel respected in these interests, in their rate of work, opinions and in their own learning processes in order to gain trust and confidence, participating actively in the development of activities and project work.</i></p>	<p><i>... every child is a <b>unique child</b>, who is constantly learning and can be resilient, capable, confident and self-assured;</i></p>

**Table 3 - Comparing curriculums against the core features.**

These examples show that embedded within each curriculum are the features which are likely to be conducive to the cultivation of creativity. Yet within this, there are some areas that both curriculums could improve in. The Catalan curriculum is very centred on promoting the child's independence (Departament d'Educació, 2008) - those life skills that have been a feature of Catalan practice for centuries. In both Lloc A and Lloc B, this practice was highly noticeable as three to four year olds were expected to perform a great deal of tasks, such as toileting, feeding and dressing, to a high level of competence. As a visitor to the settings, I was asked not to help a child button their coat in order to better promote that child's independence. The curriculum also indicates that teachers should plan around children's interests and respect the rate at which they work (Departament d'Educació, 2008), though as highlighted earlier in this chapter, the settings visited seemed to offer a particularly adult-led version of practice. In spite of a high regard for autonomy, risk-taking here is still very much associated with the idea of danger, rather than learning about and taking risks, children are simply expected to exercise prudence in the face of *risc o perill* (Departament d'Educació, 2008). The EYFS (DfE, 2012a) is also keen to recognise the independence and autonomy of children, though there is less emphasis in the text than the Catalan document. It recognises the importance of child-led learning and discusses how the professional will need to constantly weigh up the outcomes of using child-led or adult-led activities (DfE, 2012a).

The weakest feature for the Early Years Foundation Stage is that of *Immersion in a loving environment* - where the Catalan document talks of accepting children with love and affection, these words are noticeably absent from the lexicon of the English document (Departament d'Educació, 2008; DfE, 2012a). It is certainly a cliché that the English are cold and repressed while Mediterranean people are considered to be more open, though it may also be possible that repeated sexual abuse scandals over recent years might have made the English authorities very circumspect about encouraging emotional connections in professional work with children. The EYFS requires that all children should be allocated a Key Person '...to help ensure that every child's care is tailored to meet their individual needs ... to help the child become familiar with the setting, offer a settled relationship for the child and build a relationship with their parents.' (DfE, 2012a: p18). Yet this description does not appear to incorporate the deeper affection that the Catalan approach advocates and Cremin et al. (2006 in Craft: 2008) suggest is a prerequisite for creativity to take place. On the other hand, it is an interesting consideration whether a professional can raise love and affection to order for all the children in their care, particularly if, in the case of Lloc B, there is only one member of staff to care for 25 children.

Each system takes a different view on how rigidly their curriculum should be followed: where England's EYFS is clear that it is very much a prescription for every early years setting to follow (DfE, 2012a), the Catalan decree regarding early years education between the ages of three to six, which includes the curriculum, insists on the autonomy of the pedagogy and organisation of Catalan settings (Departament d'Educació, 2008). Conversely, the Decret 181/2008 renders its purposes in much greater detail than the Early Years Foundation Stage currently does (Departament d'Educació, 2008; DfE, 2012a). Interestingly, the original EYFS documentation from 2007/2008 was more complex and accompanied by a separate document which included much detailed guidance to help practitioners meet the Early Learning Goals (Department for Education and Skills, 2008).

Today's version of the EYFS results from a review by the Coalition Government, whose revised edition published in 2012 aimed to 'to reduce burdens, including unnecessary regulation and paperwork, so professionals have more time to concentrate on supporting children.' (Department for Education/HM Treasury, 2014). Subsequently, *Early years outcomes: A non-statutory guide for practitioners and inspectors to help inform understanding of child development through the early years* (DfE, 2013c) was published setting out what the desired outcomes should look like e.g. "shows interest in different occupations and ways of life"(27). However, the guidance provided for practitioners to help achieve these outcomes was no longer provided. The EYFS was updated once more in September 2014, though its changes are largely confined to safeguarding and welfare requirements (Department for Education/HM Treasury, 2014); therefore do not impact upon the aims of this project.

So, Catalan settings are given more guidance, but with greater autonomy over delivery, whereas English settings are more restricted yet given less guidance: Profesora B from Lloc A made an interesting point regarding the curriculum, stating that 'all fiction is better than reality', by which she points to a large gap between theory and practice in Catalan schools (Interview with Profesora B - Lloc A, 2013). The English practitioners, by contrast, concurred with Practitioner A in Setting B that the statutory framework should be regarded as a 'base level', the minimum of what they should endeavour to achieve (Interview with Practitioner A - Setting B, 2014). A curriculum in itself then is no guarantee of practice; much depends on how they are interpreted. For this reason, curriculum content alone cannot be a reliable indicator of the degree to which creativity is fostered by each approach.

## **Summation.**

This section has focused on how the economy, politics and policy - particularly the curriculum - impact upon the fostering of creativity in the early years in both countries. The evidence it collects is still more about intended practice than actual practice as it does not yet look into the settings themselves, only the documentation that might affect them. One important factor that this section does highlight is the impact of the economic crash on each country, which though the chronosystem indicated had an impact on English spending, this section shows the repercussions for Catalonia to have been far more severe (British Chambers of Commerce, 2014; Sérvulo González, 21<sup>st</sup> February 2014).

### *What are the two national cultural perspectives regarding creativity in education?*

This section has little to say about cultural perspectives per se as it is more concerned with the intentions of both nations regarding early years education and creativity. However, if we follow Dewey's (1897) logic that education reflects the society around it, then these documents might be said to bear some relation to prevailing cultural perspectives. That being the case, it would appear from examining the two curriculums that the English perspective actively values creativity while the Catalan approach values many of the features that facilitate it or it facilitates (DfE, 2012a; Departament d'Educació, 2008).

### *What are the prevailing policy approaches to early years education and creativity in each country?*

Each country has its own curriculum, differentiated from the rest of the Kingdoms that they form a part of. The English curriculum explicitly advocates creative teaching and learning as an overall approach whereas the Catalan document only mentions it with regard to art though it should be noted that the Catalan approach appears to view art as an element of a much larger area, that of language and communication (DfE, 2012a; Departament d'Educació, 2008). In spite of these differences, the recommendations of both go some way to meeting the conditions set out by Cremin et al. (2006 in Craft, 2008) for cultivating creativity. The data indicate varying degrees of value placed upon these aspects of the creative process. Regarding play in learning, English guidance promotes play as the most effective method of learning (DfE, 2012a) where Catalan guidance appears to view it as *part* of learning alongside work (Departament d'Educació, 2008). The Catalan curriculum is much less coy about the relationships there needs to be between staff and children, actively promoting the importance of love, which the English guidance stops short of. Both countries have been under pressure to save money, leading to changes in tax credits in the UK (NDNA, 2013) and attempts to cut staff

numbers in both countries, though this policy has only been successful in Catalonia. Both of these policies may impact on a setting's capability to effectively promote creativity.

*How do these cultural and policy approaches translate to impact on the fostering of creativity in the early years setting?*

The content of this section was nominally based on documentary evidence, therefore cannot say too much about what is happening within settings, however some of that documentation included research into the impact of recent policies. The NDNA (2013) highlighted that the changes in tax credits impact on the financial viability of private settings, meaning that they have less money for higher qualified staff. This is a problem for fostering creativity as it is generally understood that skills and qualifications are essential for good outcomes and putting theory into practice (DfE, 2012; Sylva et al., 2004; Carr, 1980). References have also been made to the setting profiles and interview data that will be explored in depth in the following sections. These data suggest that the staff cuts in Catalonia make the task of fostering creativity quite difficult for teachers, and that practitioners from each country interpret their guidance differently: the Catalan curriculum might not actually reflect what is happening in classrooms, whereas the English curriculum is viewed as a minimum baseline of practice.

*What degrees of difference are there in the actual fostering of creativity in early years settings between the two countries?*

Once again, this section has little to offer about actual practice - that will be explored more fully in the following sections. However, if both countries recommend the implementation of practice that mirrors the core features of learners' and teachers' engagement (Cremin et al., 2006 in Craft, 2008), but only one country's curriculum is viewed as a prescription, it might be supposed that there will be differences in the degree to which creativity is fostered. Data from the settings will have to be explored before this can be judged to be the case.

...

In summary, both countries have faced similar problems in recent years that have impacted upon the ability of the respective governments to fund and invest in their early years sectors. The economic crisis has impacted upon Catalonia to greater extent, and its recovery is likely to take longer. These problems have had a direct impact on the fostering of creativity in both countries by reducing the quality of staff (in terms of levels of qualification) in England and the quantity of staff in Catalonia. Both countries provide a curriculum for their settings which advocate the practices that are accepted to promote creativity (Cremin et al., 2006 in Craft,

2008), though different emphases are placed upon them. The English curriculum might be viewed as having a greater impact upon practice than the Catalan one, which allows for greater flexibility in its implementation in settings.



### **Mesosystem – dialogue and conflicts.**

The mesosystem is an interesting part of the ecology; it is less an area in itself, more a process, concerned with how the microsystem intersects with other microsystems, the exosystem and wider afield (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). This section will therefore be considering aspects such as setting connections with families, assessment, staff training, inspection and the impacts these elements may have upon creativity.

Looking at the connections settings have with families reveals a three-way process. In England, the introduction for the Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage (DfE, 2012a) makes it clear that there needs to be partnership working between parents or carers and early childhood settings. This is reiterated throughout the document and furthermore, it requires practitioners to give regular reports to parents and carers on their child's progress, keep them informed about practice in the setting and help them to access additional support if required (DfE, 2012a). The Catalan document states that parents and carers are a key part of the child's education and that settings should work closely with them, and that families and schools must share responsibilities, though it is considerably less prescriptive about how or what should take place exactly (Departament d'Educació, 2008). Against this guidance filtering down from the exosystem, are the different ways in which the two microsystems, home and early years setting, conform to these objectives.

Some of these approaches to partnership working may be connected to the values and beliefs inherent in each culture: as related in the section on ethical requirements, there were obvious differences between English and Catalan values concerning educational research. Looking back at the cultural beliefs that were explored in the section concerned with the macrosystem, there is certainly something here about the role of education in society and the role of parents within education. It was remarked upon that Catalans value solidarity (Mas, 2007) whereas the British (and by extension the English) value the liberty of the individual. In terms of the degree



to which parents and carers have input in their children's education, it is possible that Catalan families are likely to assume that anything that happens in school is for the greater good therefore they do not feel the need to intervene, whereas the English parent is more disposed to take into account their child's and their own feelings and opinions into account before that of the state. How this impacts upon the fostering of creativity is complex, as the following paragraph will go on to explore.

On the one hand, if parents are fighting for their child's interests to be taken into account, this is a positive step, because it is known that children require their motivations and interests to be valued in order for creativity to be effectively cultivated (Craft, 2008). On the other, Practitioner A in Setting B acknowledges that not all parents see the value in creativity and the activities used to cultivate it because '...parents ... try to pigeonhole us into doing set things at set times: you must go swimming on a Wednesday, you must be able to write by the time you are 5' (Interview with Practitioner A - Setting B, 2014), an attitude which can hinder practice where the parents have a greater input. Parents can have an enormous impact on children's learning in terms of what they do with children at home but also in the information that is shared between them and the setting: the EPPE project identified these factors as having a major impact on children's learning (Sylva et al., 2004). In relation to the socio-emotional aspects of creativity, Bruce (2011) emphasises that children need to feel loved, valued and emotionally safe in order to be creative. If one takes into account Bowlby's (2005) understanding that a securely attached child feels able to explore the environment fully and that autonomy should come about in easy, unforced stages, attenuating the home link but not breaking it, then perhaps closer connections between home and setting will ease the child's settling, increasing security and boosting confidence in exploring and manipulating their surroundings.

Assessment also has an effect on relations between microsystems and the exosystem. It is commonly acknowledged that there are two types of assessment, formative and summative, but Nutbrown (2006) argues that there are three distinct purposes for it in the early years. These are: Assessment for teaching and learning, Assessment for management and accountability, and Assessment for research (Nutbrown, 2006). Nutbrown (2006) suggests that the first type is largely concerned with the building up of a picture of children's situations, the second prefers scores over descriptions of children's learning and the last are specific to research projects where easily implemented measures are required. Though assessments in this final category are likely to be carried out by and received by a specific group, those in the

first and second category may appear in the consciousness of a wide range of partners in the child's education, which may precipitate unintended effects. Roberts (1995 in Nutbrown, 2006) talks about the 'hidden messages' that assessment may convey to children and parents, with implications for children's emotional well-being. Naturally, as raised in the previous paragraph, such implications will have a knock-on effect upon children's creative expressions.

The curriculums under study for this project take different approaches: the EYFS (DfE, 2012a) takes three pages to outline its assessment requirements where Decret 181/2008 (Departament d'Educació, 2008) employs one article (250 words). As with many other aspects of Catalan early years practice, it is the settings' responsibility to come up with adequate assessment arrangements; the only requirements being that continual assessment should take place in order to monitor children's progress and the effectiveness of teaching methods and that at the end of the cycle, the teachers must produce a report of each child's progress which must then be passed on to the next teacher (Departament d'Educació, 2008). In England, continual formative assessment is also required, and having reached the end of the stage, each child will receive an a Profile in which they are assessed against the early learning goals of the EYFS and must reflect discussions with parents or carers as well as the professionals who interact with the child (DfE, 2012a). The completed profile must then be shared with the child's parents or carers and a copy sent to the child's new teacher in primary school (DfE, 2012a). Early years providers in England must also supply these data to the Local Authority as requested, which will be sent to the relevant Government department (DfE, 2012a).

Once again, there is a difference in interpretation, if one were to only look at what the Catalan document determines is assessment, it would seem that parents are rather kept in the dark regarding their children's progress (Departament d'Educació, 2008). Yet within the section on relationships between home and setting, there is a strict injunction for each setting to provide families with at least one interview on beginning the cycle and one other during the course of it, a group meeting at the beginning of each year of the cycle and two written reports for the family (Departament d'Educació, 2008). This is an example of Williams' (1983) 'problem of vocabulary', where certain uses of words are entangled with perceptions about culture and society: providing information to parents on children's progress is not considered assessment, assessment has a particular, administrative role. Such interpretations may have an effect upon the 'hidden messages' alluded to by Roberts (1995 in Nutbrown, 2006). For English children, their progress is *assessed* against criteria (DfE, 2012a), whereas their Catalan counterparts are *reported* (Departament d'Educació, 2008): the first action is redolent of a child being placed

upon a scale, while the second appears to focus more upon the child's progress as an individual.

In terms of creativity, the idea of measurability in terms of linear progress is what Ken Robinson (2001) describes as the 'septic focus', which may stifle or ignore the true talents of the individuals. However, there are researchers such as Nutbrown (2006) who would argue that 'respectful' assessment is both possible and beneficial to children, their families and their educators. The Early Years Foundation Stage (DfE, 2012a) outlines what should be assessed, and that this information should come from observations, records and discussions with relevant adults in the child's life. A 'respectful' approach to assessment would put the onus on the child at the centre of the process: their views, interests and needs (Nutbrown, 2006). Nutbrown (2006) acknowledges that taking an approach like this would require a knowledgeable and appropriately-qualified practitioner, but such a person would be able to carry out the assessment process in a way that would be of benefit to the child and carry positive messages to them and their parents or carers and indeed, support their creativity.

This last point leads to one of the greater divergences between the two education systems: the level of qualification of their early years workforce. The wide variety of provision in England with its diffuse origins means that there has also traditionally been a great disparity in the levels of qualification of the professionals working with young children and low levels of pay (Pugh, 2006). Though the Childcare Act 1996 (HM Government, 1996) in tandem with the first EYFS (DCSF, 2008) enshrined a minimum qualification of level 3 for those in supervisory roles, research undertaken by the Effective Provision of Preschool Education project had identified that levels of staff qualification were critical in ensuring quality provision (Sylva et al., 2004). This led to a Government push to attempt to professionalise the workforce, attracting graduates to a new qualification, Early Years Professional Status (EYPS); these practitioners would lead practice within settings and it was hoped that each setting would have at least one person qualified to this level by 2015 (Children's Workforce Development Council, 2008).

Most recently, the current government introduced Early Years teacher status specialising in the 0-5 age range (DfE, 2013b). This qualification has the same entry requirements as other routes into teaching, including substantial bursaries for the highest-qualified graduates (DfE, 2013b). However, in spite of the title, early years teachers do not receive Qualified Teacher Status, which has meant that there is no parity in either pay or conditions with those professionals working in schools (National Children's Bureau, 2013). Though much funding was put into this push to raise qualification levels in the non-maintained part of the sector (Murray,

2009), the number of staff qualified to graduate level and above working with young children remains low: the Institute for Public Policy Research has this year published a report making various recommendations for the overhaul of the early years sector. One such recommendation is having all practitioners working with two-year olds and over qualified to at least National Vocational Qualifications (NVQ) level three, while ensuring that at least 30% of the workforce are graduates (Ben-Galim et al., 2014). Yet without parity of status and the costs involved in reaching a post-graduate level of qualification, it is difficult to make this an attractive option to the workforce.

These figures around professional qualifications in England are in stark contrast to Catalonia, where all nursery classes are required to be led by qualified teachers (Departament d'Educació, 2008). How well-qualified staff are in England also appears to be a function of the type of setting: the EYFS states that for three year olds in maintained nurseries and schools, at least one member of staff must be a qualified teacher and at least one other member of staff must have a NVQ level three qualification while for other types of settings, the requirement is for one member of staff to have a level 3 qualification and the rest to have a level 2 (DfE, 2012a). Taking into account the fact that only about 15.6% of all nurseries are maintained (Brind et al., 2012) this means that a large proportion of nursery groups are not required to have graduate-level and above staffing. However, as can be seen from the table of qualifications from each setting below, each English setting is running at or above current requirements (Setting A is a maintained nursery, Setting B is non-maintained) and indeed the national average, which indicated that in 2011 only 11% of staff nationally were qualified to degree level (Brind et al., 2012).

Lloc A	Lloc B	Setting A	Setting B
<b>Lead Practitioner:</b> Qualified Teacher	<b>Lead Practitioner:</b> Qualified Teacher	<b>Lead Practitioner:</b> Qualified Teacher	<b>Lead Practitioner:</b> Early Years Professional
<b>Team members:</b> Qualified Teacher	<b>Team members:</b> Qualified Teacher	<b>Team members:</b> Qualified Teacher x2 Qualified Teaching Assistants x 6 Apprentice Teaching Assistant	<b>Team members:</b> BA Hons Level 3 Childcare x2 Unqualified assistant x2

**Table 4 - Practitioner qualifications.**

## **Summation.**

The mesosystem is not confined to one relationship between the microsystem and the larger systems beyond; it maps all of these connections. This section has explored partnership with parents, assessment and staff training, three factors that link the microsystem of the setting with that of the home and the exo- and macrosystems too. These factors do not necessarily chime squarely with all the research questions, but as in the previous sections, they can provide us with other small pieces of the puzzle.

### *What are the two national cultural perspectives regarding creativity in education?*

This section did not address this particular question directly, though it did consider cultural values to try to understand the information obtained about practices that may in turn impact upon the cultivation of creativity in early years settings. As a result, it considered that British/English beliefs in the liberty of the individual (Brown, 2004) and Catalan beliefs in solidarity (Mas, 2007) can impact on the willingness of parents to intercede in their children's education, that in England assessment implies measurement against criteria (DfE, 2012a) whereas in Catalonia it is the reporting of the child's actuality that matters (Departament d'Educació, 2008); finally, if statutory guidance may be viewed to reflect the culture, Catalonia would appear to place a greater emphasis on staff qualification (DfE, 2012a; Departament d'Educació, 2008).

### *What are the prevailing policy approaches to early years education and creativity in each country?*

As above, this was not a question that was particularly answered by this section; it looked at the policy surrounding the linking factors that were explored. The data supplied by this method have revealed that the curriculums of both countries acknowledge the importance of working closely with parents, though the English one gives significantly more guidance as to how this should occur; the English curriculum makes concrete assessment demands where its Catalan counterpart simply requires some arrangements in place (DfE, 2012a; Departament d'Educació, 2008). Catalan early years professionals are all required to be qualified teachers whereas in England, non-maintained settings are not currently required to have a member of staff qualified to more than NVQ level three (DfE, 2012a; Departament d'Educació, 2008).

### *How do these cultural and policy approaches translate to impact on the fostering of creativity in the early years setting?*

Craft (2008) argued that children's needs and motivations need to be considered in order to

effectively foster creativity, including, as Bruce (2011) also highlights, their feelings of safety, security and being valued. Working in partnership with parents can help in this process as they can provide the setting with information about the children and also encourage them at home (Sylva et al., 2004). It can also help to make the transition from home to setting easier, bearing in mind Bowlby's (2005) work on attachment theory. Quality early years education also requires well-trained staff (e.g. Carr, 1980; Ben-Galim et al., 2014) and there is a difference in the requirements for this between the two countries (DfE, 2012a; Departament d'Educació, 2008). An emphasis on summative assessment and measurability may hinder creativity in that its 'septic focus' may smother children's true talents and abilities (Robinson, 2001), but 'respectful' assessment could be helpful for children's all-round development (Nutbrown, 2006), which many researchers into creativity and the early years highlight as key to successful practice (e.g. Craft, 2008; Bruce, 2011).

*What degrees of difference are there in the actual fostering of creativity in early years settings between the two countries?*

As yet, this document has not explored any empirical data as to what is actually occurring in the classroom, but owing to the factors outlined above, there would appear to be certain strengths and weaknesses in each country's approach. It might be expected that English settings might struggle to effectively foster creativity if their staff are not particularly well-trained: they may not be fully aware that the EYFS (DfE, 2012a) considers a characteristic of effective learning and teaching to be 'creating and thinking critically' or, as Carr (1980) points out, they may not have the ability to translate this into actual practice. The assessment demands made by the EYFS (DfE, 2012a) might also impede the cultivation of creativity in English settings by causing a 'septic focus' onto more easily measurable areas of learning (Robinson, 2001). It is even possible that this last point may be exacerbated by the first. On the other hand, it might be expected that Catalonia would struggle to support the children's individual needs that impact on creativity (e.g. Craft, 2008; Bruce, 2011) owing to the lesser focus on working in partnership with parents.

...

The data supplied in this section have highlighted some of the major links between the different levels of the ecosystem, the threads that run through the story of early years education and creativity. It cannot answer many of the research questions directly, but it has supplied background information about several of the phenomena within the ecosystem and provided material that can be used to make predictions about what might actually be

happening in settings today. Yet, without looking at the practice within the microsystem, it is not yet possible to establish the effect of these threads on the actual fostering of creativity.



### **Microsystem – interactions and reactions.**

This section is concerned with the interactions between the child and the environment of the early childhood setting. The definition of environment used here takes its cue from Duffy (2006) in that it recognises that the environment includes not just the physical layout and material resourcing of the setting, but contains an emotional aspect too: the people within it, staff and children, are also part of the environment. Within this section, data from two methods will be explored: interviews with practitioners and observation of practice. Both of these methods will be analysed using Cremin et al.'s (2006 in Craft, 2008) core features of learners' and teachers' engagement (see Chapter 3, Figures 3 & 4, p76 and 80) in order to pick up links between the knowledge, experience and perceptions of the practitioners and what was actually taking place in the setting. The balance of these interviews with the observations is slightly problematic in that the English settings employ much larger staff teams, including part-time staff. Interviewing the whole team would have been difficult to achieve in the timescale and would have produced rather more data than could be managed by this project. It was therefore decided to mimic the roles in the Catalan settings and simply interview the two members of staff who had the greatest input into practice. One other issue in comparing staff interviews with practice was the fact that the second practitioner in Lloc B was not present for any of the observations; he was primarily employed as a music teacher so was rarely available for that class. This can only be accepted as a true and honest account of that setting, perhaps it must be considered that his views would have little impact on practice. In each setting, six narrative observations were taken of the interactions of the children and staff in each environment for samples of approximately 25 minutes across two days. All translations are my own.

The following are four short descriptions of the settings visited. Full profiles may be found in Appendix B. The information within each profile is either observed first-hand or gleaned from literature and web-resources from the settings themselves or the local authorities.

**Lloc A.**

A nursery class in a small coastal town in Maresme, Catalonia. Population working to middle-class including many immigrants. 21 children, one lead practitioner (9 years experience) and one assistant (11 years experience).

**Lloc B.**

A nursery class in a very small coastal town in Maresme, Catalonia. Population mostly middle-class with a fair proportion of more affluent foreign families. 25 children, one lead practitioner (17 years experience) and an occasional assistant (6 - 8 hours per week, 5 years experience).

**Setting A.**

A maintained nursery in a small rural market town in the West Midlands, England. Population mostly middle to working class, high proportion of eastern European immigrants. 70 children on the books, average of 40 in attendance at any given time. 2 full-time teachers (20 years plus experience each), one part-time, 6 assistants (2 full-time) (various) and one apprentice (1 year experience).

**Setting B.**

A charitable trust preschool attached to a primary school in a small market town in the West Midlands, England. Population mostly middle-class including more affluent foreign families. 37 children on roll, average of 20 - 30 in attendance. One full-time Early Years Professional (9 years experience), one full-time graduate (11 years experience) and 4 part-time assistants (various).

...

**Overall features of the results.**

Before analysis takes place for the individual features, the overall data from these methods raised some interesting points. Primarily, certain issues were highlighted in the interviews (see Appendix D for questions) that might be termed superordinate themes (Bazely, 2013) in that they connect across and contribute to the manifestation of the core features. These two superordinate themes were *Knowledge* and *Environment*. The first of these refers to the knowledge, learnt or experienced that practitioners have about creativity, its nature, role and function. The second reflects Duffy's (2006) interpretation of an environment that includes space, resources and relationships. Into this last category, we might also include culture and



policy as they are major forces that shape the environment. This section will explore the impact of both these themes upon fostering creativity in the early years settings.

In general, the interviews with all the practitioners from both countries revealed an awareness of the importance of creativity, though only two, Profesor B - Lloc B, a musician who particularly highlighted imagination and musical development, and Practitioner B - Setting A, an ex-Forest School leader, suggested that it was the most important area of the curriculum. Variances in valuation notwithstanding, though the practitioners may not have been directly referencing creativity researchers, they generally seemed to have some instinctive understanding of its nature and the fact that it might manifest across a range of activities. Profesora B from Lloc A pointed out that '... if a child had creativity, had the thing, that is an innate thing, they would be much more motivated because it is something that they are discovering for themselves, because they wanted to discover it and then they need to discover it because it is what they have chosen ...'. Practitioner B - Setting B stated '...and it can be anything, it doesn't have to be in any specific area ...'. Interestingly, Practitioner A - Setting A unconsciously echoed the Catalan curriculum by saying '... communication and language ... which can encompass ... lots of other curriculum areas and if you consider that creativity, or art and drama, is a form of expression ...'. In England, all practitioners talked with enthusiasm about the different activities they had arranged to allow the children to develop their creativity, though there were differences in how deeply these activities were understood and how well their implications for the child in later life were recognised.

Practitioner A from Setting A was very clear about how creativity can be a tool that can help children overcome difficulties such as communication difficulties caused by developmental delay, neurological issues or English as an additional language: '...the way that they do that, the way that they solve the problem of not being able to communicate their needs initially gives you a clue about how creative they are'. This view was echoed by Profesora B from Lloc A who felt that creativity was how '... the child can express their needs, their interests, their objectives and learn in the best way possible.' Both of these women were qualified teachers with many years of experience behind them, though as will be seen from the observations, the degree to which this understanding translated into practice was very different. Practitioner A from Setting B felt that creative activities could be used to foster '...the confidence to have a go, the confidence for life skills to becoming a rocket scientist. It'll affect life' while Profesora A - Lloc B recognised that developing creativity was essential in order to prepare for everyday difficulties that might arise in the future. Every practitioner interviewed recognised creativity

as beneficial in some way for children, though three out of four English practitioners and two out of four Catalan practitioners were able to define these benefits knowledgeably.

The biggest difficulty faced by the interviewees was in trying to articulate the role of creativity in society. Half of the answers that they gave revealed a difficulty in separating the concept from education and an attitude that beyond the early years, perhaps creativity was more of a luxury than a necessity, connecting it to cultural celebrations and hobbies (Practitioner B - Setting B), to freedom of expression (Practitioner A - Setting B) and believing it to be something that could only be achieved by adopting a slower pace of life (Profesora A - Lloc A). Practitioner A from Setting B did also feel that creativity enabled the individual to 'imagine things'.

The rest mirrored contemporary thinking on the subject: Profesor B - Lloc B said 'It's a way of life, a language ... it's important even in your home'. Profesora B - Lloc A identified the subjectivity inherent in recognising something or someone as creative: 'I am a person who may very much like an author or a poet or a poetess or a writer or a sculptor and think that they are very creative, very innovative, and maybe others won't see it the same way as me.'

Practitioner B - Setting A recognised the contribution of creativity to society bemoaning the fact that the best creative minds tend to leave the country because 'creativity is not what it should be'. Profesora A - Lloc B felt that '...it is not valued ...at least here in Spain ... it is not developed'. In short, there was much variance in how well-informed and how much thought practitioners had given to creativity; these differences did not appear to fall along national lines, even though there were significant differences in actual practice. The degree of education and experience held by a practitioner could not be proved to be a factor, though the least clear understandings of the concept were voiced by one interviewee with slightly lower qualifications; however the differences were by no means clear-cut.

The Catalan interviews raised specific issues that were not echoed by the English participants. Profesora A from Lloc B felt that early years education needed to be 'the opposite of what we have now' and the lack of adult supervision reduced her opportunities for finding space to cultivate creativity in the class; particularly as there were so many required areas she felt that she had to cover. She did however feel 'maybe it's an excuse that we have: the excuse is "I've got lots of children so I can't"'. Though less explicit about the impact of staffing on creativity, Profesora B from Lloc A said '... I think that education has to be more than one teacher per classroom in order to meet those needs that maybe I see I've missed ...'. Profesora A from Lloc B did acknowledge that she would like to approach things differently but perhaps it was easier

to adhere to the letter of the curriculum and to change would require not only some confidence and training on her part, but also a general change in ethos in the school she worked in regarding the value of fostering creativity. She also stated twice in her interview 'I am not really a creative person' and hoped for some training or guidance.

Curiously, early in Profesora A - Lloc B's interview she characterised people not thinking that they were creative as one of the many prejudices around creativity. The issues of ethos and curriculum were also touched upon by Profesora A from Lloc A who seemed to be able to treat these barriers with greater confidence: '... in this country, creativity is quite removed from the curriculum ... you know, sometimes you say "Are you crazy? 25 children painting?" Yes, let them paint, it's fine, if they mess the floor up, it's fine ... Sometimes you get a bit fed up with the insistence that you have to do something because you have to get somewhere ... creating is a good moment, it's not seeing how we can get to p5 (the next stage in primary school)'. However, for this practitioner, the curriculum was dominated by what she called the 'Maria' subjects, roughly equivalent to the English 'Three Rs', which she did feel an obligation to follow. These views are interesting when juxtaposed with the outline of the Catalan document laid out in the exosystem as they seem to bear little resemblance to each other.

It was in Lloc B where a moral dilemma regarding the research process occurred that would, as Robinson-Pant (2005) describes, change my role from observer to actor. The remit of this study was to identify what is happening in both systems, not to intervene, but this practitioner was very much under-pressure and finding it hard to cope. From time to time in that class I found myself as a practitioner, particularly as there was one child intent on escape. AERA (2011) state that the educational researcher should do no harm: in these instances, inaction on my part would have been harmful to the children; therefore I was obliged to sacrifice objectivity in order to avoid this. I also found myself offering solicited advice to the practitioner on how to implement more creative practice within her constraints. Though this could have impacted upon the truthfulness of my remaining observations, bearing in mind Sikes & Nixon's (2003) moral imperative to educational research, maybe contributing to the setting under observation is more valuable than simply taking impressions away.

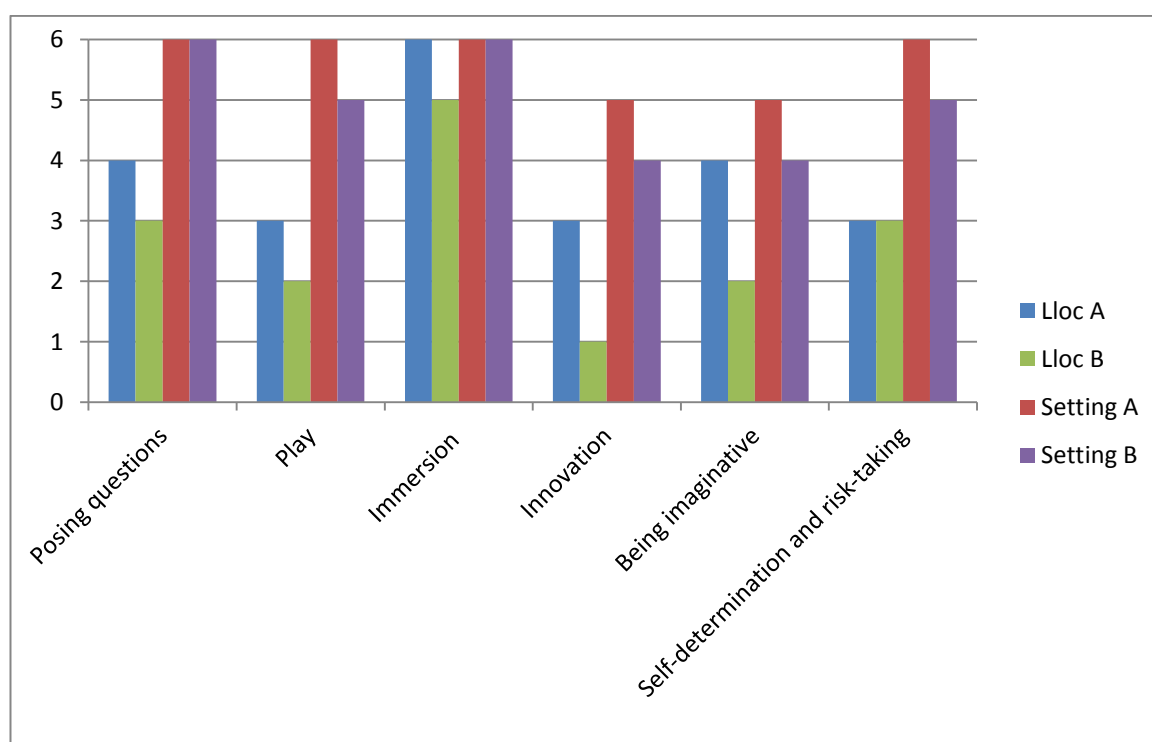
The barriers towards fostering creativity that were highlighted by the English practitioners tended to be more cultural. Such barriers were acknowledged by some practitioners to exist at a general level: 'I don't think we value creativity enough in this country, in the school system it's "sit down, don't draw it like this, draw it like that"' (Practitioner B - Setting A) or the media calling it 'left-wing, hippy blah' (Practitioner A - Setting A). This was a common thread: 'Our

overall bodies, like the Government, like our parents, tend to pigeonhole us into doing things at set times ... I think we've created a culture of not allowing that expansion, that freedom of expression ... but then we have this structure of when they start school, the Government structure means that this box has got to be ticked ... and when we're parents, we only go back in our memories as far as what we could do when we were writing and reading ...' (Practitioner A - Setting B). This particular practitioner is hinting at an issue that was raised in both settings: the fact that these cultural attitudes can lead to parental distrust or misunderstanding of creative activities, as highlighted by Practitioner A - Setting A: '... people, they fundamentally believe that creativity is not to do with technology and it's not to do with science and it's not to do with maths ... I've been defining to parents for a long time what "What did you do today? - Oh, I just played" what that actually means ... I think a big fillip to improving creativity would be to teach parents how to play.', though practitioners from both settings discussed methods they were using to attempt to deal with this problem.

On the whole, all the English practitioners were happy with what they had been able to achieve and felt that their plans were within their reach, though Practitioner A from Setting B would like more investment for resources that would allow her to extend creative practice. This perhaps was less of a concern for the practitioners in Setting A, which was exceptionally well-resourced: as a maintained setting they do not have the same cash-flow concerns as a small charity preschool. In terms of how the curriculum impacted upon practice, the English practitioners recognised their obligation to meet its requirements, though not at the expense of providing an individualised experience for the children in their care. 'Obviously, we have to follow the EYFS and there is a section within that that does revolve around creativity. So we do have to may be gear our activities slightly towards those aspects, although as you've seen through your observations, our activities will change with the children's interests so ... we do also take into consideration their interests and what they would like to do.' (Practitioner B - Setting B). This was articulated more strongly yet in Setting A, whose lead practitioners had decades more experience in the sector thus were more accustomed to working without one, according to Practitioner A there: 'I don't know whether official curriculum guidance affects my approach in the slightest ... I suppose we've become very good at reading the document and making it work ... it could be quite a constraining document if we weren't creative people'.

In general, the class-based, adult-led structure of Catalan classes was less conducive to these features appearing: many of the Catalan observations were of a teacher-led activity such as writing names, reading a story or making patterns. This is not to say that no adult-led activities

were observed in the English nurseries, quite the contrary. Circle-time was observed at Setting A along with other, smaller craft and snack activities and singing and a vet's visit were observed in Setting B, yet in spite of the highly supervised and structured nature of these activities, the practitioners seemed to incorporate the flowing and thinking element of the rest of their practice into these activities. The following table shows whether Cremin et al.'s (2006 in Craft, 2008) core features of learners' and teachers' engagement were manifested in each observation. It was decided to use a simple yes/no measure as opposed to noting the frequency of manifestation, because some features are easier to count than others. *Posing questions* is easy to identify on repeat occasions during a session, but how do you count manifestations of *Play* if you are observing 25 minutes of free play: as just one incidence or as infinite examples each time the play changes? The y axis therefore indicates the number of observations during which the features were recorded.



**Figure 7 - Frequency of core features present in observations.**

These figures instantly show a disparity in the presence of the core features that foster children's creativity between the English and Catalan settings that were visited. This does not quite reveal the full story though. It is important to recognise the degree to which these observations were recorded and it is fascinating the opportunities that the children gave themselves to be curious, creative and imaginative within what might seem to be restrictive circumstances. As outlined above, it can be difficult to count the frequency of these features,

so the table below tries to give an idea as to whether the feature was a consistent element of the observations, whether it appeared at a fairly regular frequency (i.e. more than a handful of occasions) or whether they were isolated incidents – it is in no way a precise count owing to the way activities could blur together.

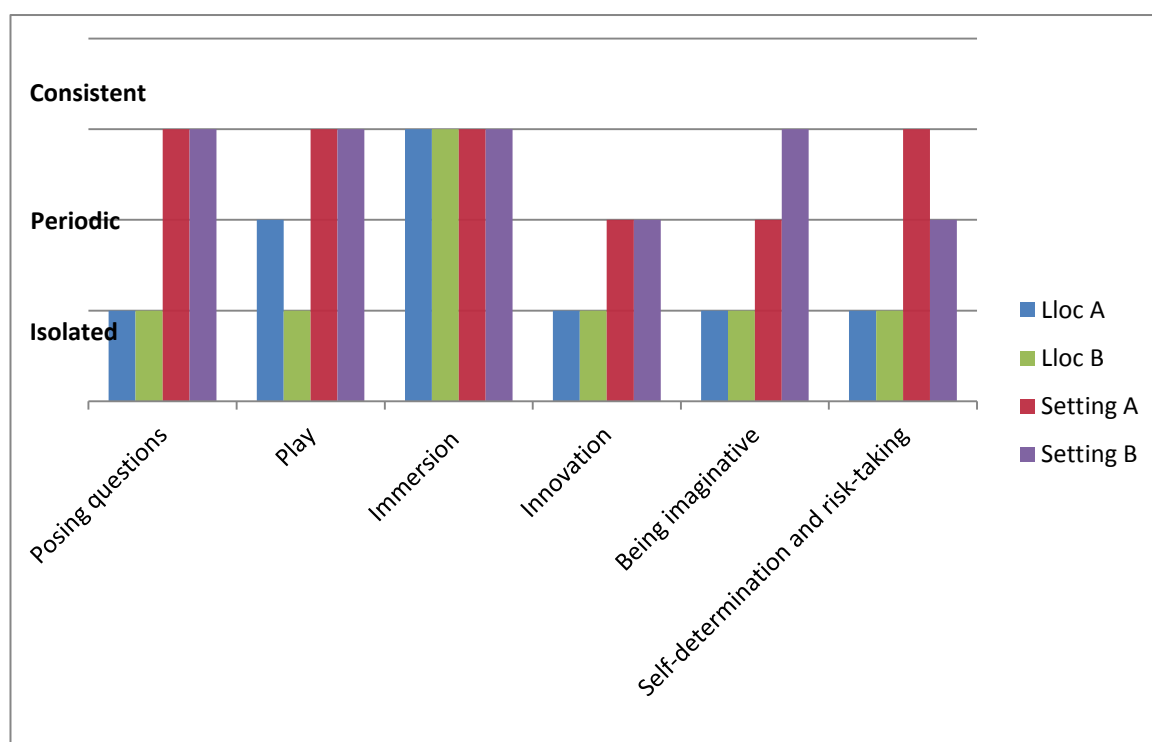


Figure 8 - Degree to which core features were sustained.

This gives a more honest account of the manifestation of the core features during the course of the observations. It can be seen that the appearance of these features within the Catalan settings was much more likely to be isolated incidents as opposed to an integrated part of the practice. This section will now group the data from both the interviews and the observations to look for evidence of the core features.

### Posing Questions.

There was a distinct variance in how often this feature appeared in the observations: it appeared in every observation in the English settings and in 4 and 3 respectively for Lloc A and B. It was also a consistent feature of those English observations, occurring throughout the time period, whereas it only appeared in isolated bursts in the Catalan settings.

The observations in Lloc A showed questioning activities in 4 out of the 6 observations, appearing only as isolated incidents. Looking at the examples, the questions that come from

the adults are quite procedural, related to the daily activities: *Who is the protagonist? Where does the shepherd go? What are the rules for behaviour?* The children on the other hand, generally used questioning outside the formal activities and in different ways. It was used as a form of play in their conversations:

*Have you not got juice?*

*What?*

*Juice!*

*Cu?*

*Juice!*

*Cu?*

*(All the children) Juuuuuuice! (Laughter all round).*

Some children also appeared to be implying questions about the possibilities of the resources that they had available by working together to fill and squash down sand in a bucket to see how much they could get in , or wondering where the boundaries of the rules lay by rushing at the apparatus before they were told. The posing and answering of questions was not mentioned by either practitioner during the interviews.

Lloc B only revealed this feature in 3 of the observations, and, as above, they were isolated incidents. The adult uses of questions were mainly in relation to an ongoing activity *Who remembers the snail story? And what did he do?*, to deal with behavioural matters *What's going on here? What are you eating?* or to test knowledge *What's this in Spanish? What's it called in French?* The lead practitioner did however play with the procedural questions during the register to try to engage the youngest and newest child:

*Has (child's name) come?*

*(silence)*

*(Picks up child) Have you not come?*

*(Nods)*

*Have you not come?*

*Siiiiii.*

As in Lloc A, the children posed questions outside the confines of the official activities. For two children in particular, these were used to try to generate a bond with me: *Would you like me to draw something for you? What are you doing? Are you going to sit down?* Amongst themselves, there were two examples similar to those found in Lloc A: children investigating the capacity of receptacles for sand and testing the rules - this time by sneaking back inside,

watching me to see what my response might be. The sand-filling incident also showed children asking each other questions about the activity: *What are you doing? It's to make it, make it go.* Neither practitioner drew attention to this feature in their interviews.

In Setting A, it was a major feature of all adult/child interaction, including activities that might not be bracketed under the educational experience, such as snack. In this setting, there would always be a practitioner stationed at this table, to which children would arrive. Children would typically be asked to make choices about the food and drink available on the table and how they wished it to be served. The practitioner would use this time as an opportunity to talk to the child about their day so far and what they intended to do afterwards:

*Have you had a good day so far (child's name)?*

*Yeah.*

*What would you like to do after snack?*

*Paint a picture, but you need to help me (practitioner's name).*

*I need to help you? What are you going to paint?*

*A blue car, a yellow flower with a green stem.*

This approach mirrored the philosophy of the lead practitioner in this setting: 'For me, it's always going to be about what we loosely call communication and language' (Practitioner A - Setting A), the same practitioner who highlighted the link between creative expression and communication. Her colleague, Practitioner B spoke of how she had to learn how to listen patiently in order to understand children '... some children know what they want to say to you, it's a matter of just waiting...'

Setting B exhibited question posing as a consistent feature across all of its observations, with Practitioner A being the principal adult proponent of this method, where even lining up to go outside was an opportunity for her to ask the children what would be happening later that day and elicit knowledge from them. This was often done in a jokey way, much to the amusement of the children:

*... then guess who's coming to visit?*

*The vet!*

*That's right, and the vet is where I go to get my teeth checked, right?*

*No!*

*It's where I get my hair shampooed?*

*No!*

*What's the vet's then?*



### *Animals!*

Her approach to questioning seemed to mirror her stated aim to 'support children with all different resources and all different aspects of creating wonder and curiosity'. The children were undeniably fascinated by her approach and gathered round to join in. Children were observed using questions with each other both to establish the aim of their play

*We're building a house, aren't we?*

but also indirectly in a sense that suggested conversation as they played

*When your mummy comes you go home.*

*Yeah, when my mummy comes.*

Staff were also careful that questions should not be used to fence children off in their discovery: a less-experienced practitioner asked a child what some taped-down paper was for on the floor and the child could not answer, Practitioner A gently suggested that 'we would have to wait and see'. Children's questions were valued both when spoken, but also when the process was more internal. As one often quiet EAL child was testing how much sand it took to bury a small tractor, Practitioner B was observed skilfully enabling this process and deflecting the attentions of other children who would interrupt. This practitioner showed the value placed on this when she was asked to consider her professional weaknesses: she felt she really had to 'learn to listen' before she could properly begin to support children.

### **Play.**

The Catalan setting scored lower for *Play* than England: appearing in 4 out of six observations for Lloc A and 3 out of six for Lloc B, generally appearing periodically and as isolated incidents respectively. Many of the adult-led activities seen in Catalonia were focused on getting the children to copy, repeat or comply, whether accessing the activity in the 'right' way e.g. forming the letters correctly rather than self-directed mark-making or, as in Lloc A, removing distractions such as long fronds of grass that were being waved like flags when they were listening to the parents who had planted the allotment. This last example demonstrated how children often sought and found opportunities to play, in spite of adult strictures. Children's instinctive bids for freedom notwithstanding, there were no real outlets for sustained play in these two settings: break times were provided by both, but the children tended to need a good ten minutes of running around before they could get engrossed in play, which would then be curtailed by the return to class.

It might have been assumed that Lloc B, with its lack of supervision might have scored better, but actually Lloc A was able to offer its children more play opportunities. One of these was

during a psychomotricity session, which consisted of some adult-led games, but also 10 or 15 minutes where children could play with a range of available resources (blocks, large cushions) as they wished. A pattern-making activity was quite formal to begin with, requiring children to place different shapes in a row to create repeating patterns, yet for those children who mastered the activity with ease, they were given the opportunity to play with this skill. They were supplied with lumps of different coloured plasticine, which one boy used to create a series of small balls leading to a big ball, which he explained as 'you go here [pointing at the small balls] and that's how you get to the island [big ball]'.

During this observation above, Lloc A had two members of staff present and 21 children, a much lower ratio of children to staff than Lloc B had during its observations. As highlighted earlier, supervision was a problem for Profesora A - Lloc B, much of the observations involved her trying to organise activities, usually group-based as individual support was problematic. The core features describe engagement as a characteristic of this feature; perhaps the supervision issues meant that there were too many interruptions to the children's activities? There were certainly more instances of children getting in each other's way in this setting, whether through actual physical aggression or annoying each other with words or actions. Physical resources also appeared to be an issue, as opposed to children being given sufficient resources to play with, like the child in the observation from Lloc A: in one observation, many children were seen crowded onto a table to read one book and others were crowded around a small basket of plastic animals. In another, the handful of buckets and spades outside were commandeered by a group of boys as swords and helmets, leaving nothing except the sandy ground, a climbing frame and each other for the rest of the children to play with.

The interviews provided some evidence about the value that the Catalan practitioners placed on play. Profesora A - Lloc A did speak about play as part of a creative activity she had carried out at Christmas, when children were supposed to be making puppets but then created their own game. She compared this example favourably to her own childhood when 'we played with stones in the street and had a good time', she felt this type of play was valuable for developing problem-solving skills in the future. Her colleague, Profesora B - Lloc A appeared to feel conflicted about the merits of play: 'I think that children need to be children but, I don't know ... some children have no interests, in the beginning its all play, play and everything - but it's true that playing is when they learn many things. They learn to be with other children, they learn things that you would not notice if you were not intellectually with other children and all that.' Profesora A - Lloc B felt that children in her class, rather than what was actually

happening, should be '... feeling and touching, if it is Autumn, go and collect leaves, look at, observe pine cones, chestnuts ...' though she did not actually use the word 'play'. Professor B kept referring to the importance of the imagination for engaging children's interest, but again did not actually mention play itself.

The English settings, by contrast, showed generally consistent levels of this feature across all the observations. This was not surprising as Setting A was almost entirely organised around sustained free-flow play, indoors and out and Setting B, though slightly less free in the use of the outdoor space, also devoted much of the day to free-flow play activity. In some ways, the recording of no *Play* in one of the Setting B observations seems a little unfair as the preschool had received a visit from the vets and two little dogs, which meant that the children needed to sit still and listen. An adult-led activity was observed in Setting A, and though it was not as long and only formed part of the observation, it was conducted in the same formal style as the vets' visit, so it can be assumed that similar visits would have had similar consequences. Both sets of observations recorded children engaged in their chosen activities for long periods of time, often for the whole 25 minutes. These included a girl in Setting A who devoted this time to carefully painting some blossom, two of her classmates constructing a place for a model turtle, a group of children in Setting B who were digging and building houses in the sand and two others who kept returning to wade through puddles.

This last example was interesting because the lead practitioners were absent for this observation and the two assistants were chatting: they would periodically stop and scan the group, telling the children to get away from the puddles, but as soon as the assistants resumed chatting, the children would resume wading. The lead practitioners might not have approved of the methods in this case, but play was certainly sustained. Children in both settings played on their own or with adult input - usually asking for advice or assistance as opposed to co-playing, perhaps aware of the practitioners' need to be there for all children rather than fully focusing on individuals. One particular little girl in Setting B was particularly keen to involve me in her game of cooking and eating, even entering the office to do so whilst I was interviewing Practitioner B. This may have been because as a relatively new, Spanish-speaking child, I was one of the first people she could properly communicate with.

The views shared by the English practitioners in their interviews reflected the degree to which understandings of play were integrated in their training and the curriculum. Practitioner B - Setting B recognised that 'doing their own play' was very much part of creativity. Her colleague, Practitioner A, felt that play was absolutely integral to their work '... so you're

always continuously extending that child's development through play'. As highlighted earlier, Practitioner A from Setting A not only recognised the value of play, but found herself explaining to parents the sheer amount of learning that 'just playing' signified for the child. The importance of play was implied rather than explicitly acknowledged by Practitioner B - Setting A, who talked about allowing 'the child to follow their own interests' as both the ideal and what they actually practised in the setting, feeling that this approach offered the best learning experience and encouraged children to develop skills such as problem-solving.

### **Immersion in a loving environment.**

It is important to note that the one thing that all the observations across the settings manifested, no matter the differences in other areas, was consistent evidence of the children being immersed in a loving environment, from smiles and eye-contact to kind words and reassurance, hugs or genuine interest in the children's lives or abilities. Looking at the first chart, it can be seen that one observation in Lloc B did not record this; not because the teacher began to behave differently, but because there was only one adult in the room, so she could not always be present for all the children - in this case she was attending to a wet-accident in the bathroom. However, she remained caring and positive throughout the observations, even while her attention was stretched in several directions or she needed to deal with behavioural issues. On one occasion, one girl said something to another that caused her to respond angrily, Profesora A - Lloc B gets down to their level and asks them to come to her. The second girl finds it difficult to calm down, but Profesora A gently reminds her that she will be the special helper later so she cannot be angry all day, which defuses the situation. It is never suggested that this privilege will be removed, more that a certain responsibility comes with the role. To a degree, the children in this setting perhaps have to take greater social responsibility amongst themselves: one child struggled eating her snacks, and one observation shows her being patiently fed, piece by piece, by her classmate, who had the air of someone who had done this many times before.

Practitioners' perspectives towards the emotional aspect of the environment could be found in their interview responses. Practitioner A from Setting A clearly recognised the value of this feature: 'the creativity of the child is enabled by the environment that they are working in, and that includes the staff'. This was not a factor that was explicitly recognised by Practitioner B - Setting A, but as highlighted earlier, she was concerned about how she related to children: 'The biggest problem that I have is not being patient, not listening for long enough, but I've learnt that now, I hope I've learnt that'. In setting B, Practitioner A said 'I think the most

important thing for a child has to be *to* develop and whether it is home or here, is to feel safe and happy' and felt that one of her greatest strengths was her natural affinity with the children who 'crawled all over' her. Practitioner B - Setting B felt that one of her strengths was 'settling children when they first arrive', transitioning the child from parent or carer to the setting 'focusing on that personal, social and emotional aspect' but she did worry that the time out she had spent over the last year finishing her studies may have had an impact on the relationships that she tried to build with children and their families.

Interestingly, the Catalan practitioners' views were all coloured by worry. For the practitioners of Lloc A, though they did not explicitly talk about providing love and emotional security, the adult-child ratios were impeding the attention that they could give children, though they partially blamed their own patience levels or priorities. Profesora A - Lloc A stated '... sometimes in the worry of not achieving what you want to achieve and knowing that you have this person in class who needs and can't achieve it because, well, you need to stop everyone to be with them and sometimes it's not, you can't'. Profesora B - Lloc A also worried that this state of affairs meant: '... I don't pay attention to some of the moments or needs that the children have'. Both practitioners from Lloc B were concerned about how they emotionally engaged with children in their teaching. Profesora A felt that one of her strengths was 'I am caring with the children, though this is sometime difficult with such large groups' but that her biggest weakness was 'I am too much of a "sufferer" for this job! I suffer for everything, if a child hurts themselves ...', while Profesor B confessed 'I take everything personally, maybe because I am a musician ... everything gets taken to the emotional level: like this child wants to hurt me, when that is not the case', though he also felt he was getting better at this.

### **Innovation.**

This feature had the overall lowest score of all and no setting was shown to be doing this consistently in any of the observations. As with many of the other features, the English settings seemed to score slightly better at this: Setting A scored the best and Lloc B the worst with only one instance in one observation. Looking at the English settings, it was clear that the one observation in Setting A that fell short in this area was the one that was mostly taken up by a more formal, adult-led circle-time activity. This might not necessarily always be an impediment to innovation, as in Setting B, practitioners still allowed children space to be make those playful connections between ideas that Cremin et al. (2006 in Craft, 2008) cite as characteristic of this feature. During the vets' visit, for example, children remarked upon the similarity of the intestinal worms they had been shown with a popular foodstuff: 'It looks like sgetti!' In the

English settings, innovation was encouraged by adults inquiring about children's processes, responding to children's requests: *Draw round me!*, but also developing and triggering thinking in laying out the environment and adding provocations such as taping paper to the floor or bringing in branches of blossom. These environments meant that children were able, particularly in Setting A, to innovate without any direct adult input such as a girl in the junk-modelling area who found that combining tape and a plastic lid allowed her to produce a convincing watch.

As indicated above, the Catalan settings scored poorly in this area, which may have something to do with the types of activities that children were able to carry out in the nursery day. The observations in Lloc A yielded 3 examples of *Innovation* taking place whereas the observations from Lloc B only recorded this happening the once. In contrast to the balance of adult and child inputs for this feature in the English settings, in Catalonia a picture was provided of children finding their own opportunities. In Lloc A, during the observation of the psychomotricity session, one child was observed playing with some circular cushions, then getting some long wooden blocks from another area. He then arranged the cushions, sat down and began to use the long blocks to 'play' the cushions like a drum kit. Playing in the sandy playground at break time with some receptacles led children to draw associations with cooking and, as mentioned earlier, finishing an activity early gave one child the opportunity to see his lumps of plasticine as islands and build on that accordingly. In Lloc B, *Innovation* could again be found in the playground: for a group of boys, buckets could be helmets and spades could be swords.

Few of the practitioners connected creativity with progress and innovation, though Profesor B from Lloc B was firm in his assertion that imagination and creativity were traits that have accompanied humans since the days of living in caves and have formed an integral part of the evolution of the race and its development of new ideas, while Practitioner A from Setting B was clear that the processes of creativity such as exploration and experimentation are the ones that will prepare the next generation of engineers and designers. In terms of innovation in the classroom, no practitioners talked about this feature explicitly, though all the practitioners gave examples of things that they had set up in their practice that would provide interesting provocations to the children's thinking and talked about how they observe the children's processes.

## Being imaginative.

The English observations scored about the same in this section as for *Innovation* and Setting B provided more consistent examples of this feature than Setting A. It should be acknowledged that it could be difficult to appreciate the difference between the 'playful connections' highlighted by *Innovation* and the 'imaginary scenarios' and 'imaginative decisions' that this feature includes. Accordingly, some of these examples were scored for both. Setting A & B showed practitioners allowing children space to be imaginative even during less play-oriented times: the child pretending to be driving the car from the song being sung by using a tambourine steering wheel and 'crashing' dramatically at the end (Setting B) or Practitioner A - Setting A making faces from the fruit at the snack table and pretending they were complaining about having their nose eaten. The value of imagination was recognised in the practitioner's interviews as well as in their actions. Practitioner A from setting B described creativity in itself as 'Creativity is how children or adults can imagine things.'

Imaginative deviations from or responses to more formal activities were usually treated as clever and/or praiseworthy rather than irrelevant or disruptive provided that they bore some connection to the activity in hand and did not disturb it too greatly. The practitioners were adept at forestalling disruption. In Setting A, circle time focused on similarities and differences and children were asked to suggest things that they all had, inevitably someone contributed 'pants', leading to much hilarity in the group. The practitioner acknowledged the value and the humour of the idea, but moved the group swiftly on to avoid laughter dissolving the activity completely. The imagination used and encouraged by the practitioners was manifested in the children's own play: perhaps imagining themselves into the role of 'mum' *Why don't you go out and have a little play and I'll call you when tea is ready* (Setting A), imagining what would happen if an adult fell down a hole *you might not get home for your tea* (Setting A), imagining themselves as giants or how they will go about finishing their sand house *I'll get the painting man to come* (Setting B).

In the Catalan settings, few examples of imaginative behaviour could be found. In Lloc B, the two examples found took place during playtime: the boys with their bucket helmets and spade swords clearly appeared to be imagining themselves as soldiers, striking war-like poses. Uniformed like this, they needed some sort of duty to perform, which was developed by one group member: throwing sand against the wall to 'make it go'. Similarly, playtime in Lloc A yielded an opportunity to be imaginative - baking cakes in the sand - but again, those activities that children could slide into the interstices of the sanctioned activities afforded them the

chance to be imaginative, that the smaller lumps of plasticine could be how one arrived on the island. For Profesor B -Lloc B, the most important area to develop in young children was the imagination, seeing it as something that '... accompanies the human being, has accompanied the human being since they were in caves and before...' He mentioned this feature on several occasions, though as highlighted by his absence from all the observations, his views may have had very little impact on practice. None of the other Catalan practitioners mentioned imagination in their interview.

### **Self-determination and risk-taking.**

There was quite a contrast in how this feature was able to manifest itself between the two countries. The English settings operated at the same level throughout the day, there were fairly consistent levels of supervision and interaction at all times throughout the days, which largely consisted of free-flow play, where children were free to choose their activities. The Catalan settings, as highlighted earlier had long, structured settings which were highly-adult-directed, contrasted with short breaks, which in the case of Lloc B could be quite unsupervised for some periods. This may be down to: legislation - in England, children may never be left unsupervised, but practitioners are required to allow children a strong input into the activities that take place (DfE, 2012a); staffing levels; or perhaps also cultural or personal beliefs about what children should be doing at this age - certainly the Catalan teachers all felt that they were somewhat obligated to operate in the way they were. In spite of adult-free moments in the Catalan settings, the consistent approach offered in the English settings offered about twice as many examples of *Self-determination and risk-taking* as the Catalan equivalents, which would seem to suggest that the adults need to be part of the process of becoming autonomous.

This last point appears to be borne out by the observations as the English adults appear to facilitate this process well, especially in Setting A. These practitioners are frequently observed giving children the choice to do what they want and where to do it, often providing them with the resources that they need to achieve their goal: a larger spade, a little help. Additionally, both settings provided examples of children engaged in tasks of their own choices and making their own decisions. Perhaps the settings had succeeded in fomenting a culture that would allow children to exercise this feature, an aim which is highlighted to varying degrees by the practitioners in setting. Practitioner B from Setting A stated: 'I like to see what children are capable of then assist them and help them but not intrusive ... I like to draw out their creativity without me being intrusive or them asking me "how can I do it?" I don't want children to say "How can I do this?" I want them to come up to me and say "Look what I've done" or "Can you



help me with this?'"'. Practitioner B - Setting B characterized their practice in this way: 'it can change according to what the children want to do and what the children's interest is'.

The lead practitioners in both settings mentioned boundaries with regard to creativity and practice: Practitioner A - Setting A said 'I want children to push boundaries' while Practitioner A - Setting B felt that creativity itself had no boundaries, though it did have 'safe boundaries'. This last point was mentioned twice in the interview, perhaps reflecting those concerns highlighted in the literature review about the dangerous nature of creativity. Interestingly, the environment of Setting A was consciously designed to allow children to take physical risks as well as intellectual ones: the outdoor areas incorporated uneven surfaces of different types and wilder areas were left to grow stinging nettles and thistles. Children were allowed to run about and use these areas as they saw fit, however one observation did show Practitioner A - Setting A stopping a child who was using some new seating to jump off, not prohibiting him, but explaining that they were likely to fall over.

The examples of this feature in both the Catalan nursery classes were three isolated incidents in each setting. In Lloc A these coincided with sanctioned freer time for the children: playtime, snack and psychomotricity. In Lloc B, two were at playtime, while the third took place as their teacher was unable to supervise them: they began to climb all over the table where an activity had been set up, as they got noisier, the teacher noticed them and went over to stop them. Profesora A - Lloc A felt that children in her class were able to achieve to the level that they wanted, without pressure and discussed the value of children making their own decisions in terms of craft activities, however, no mention was made of children having control over other aspects of their experiences. Her colleague, Profesora B - Lloc A, felt that being creative would mean the child being able to take the initiative, she wished that there could be 'freer classes, more directed by children'; she knew that some schools like this existed in Spain, however she did not feel that they were likely to spread at the moment. Over in Lloc B, again there was no indication that self-determination and risk-taking were present considerations, though Profesora A - Lloc B felt that a child who had been allowed to make their own decisions would be more likely to have an open mind towards things. Profesor B - Lloc B felt that children were becoming more and more restricted by the curriculum, to the point where they were even being taught to interpret texts 'how they are supposed to interpret them'.

## **Summation.**

The fact that some of these observations yielded fewer instances of the features than others was not always down to the practice of the adults leading the classes. Lloc B suffered particularly from the overall ethos and resourcing of the school. During one observation at break time, when several classes would usually play outside as their teachers went and took their breaks individually, it had rained the night before and the ground was damp so the department decided that all the children should stay inside. The whole of this observation consisted of the children all put into one class, watching videos, losing concentration, being told to sit still and then a later practitioner's attempts to hold their concentration with songs. As recorded in the results above, practice was strongly affected by the ability of the practitioner to be present at all times when children were using different spaces or had an urgent need to be attended.

### *What are the two national cultural perspectives regarding creativity in education?*

This is too small a sample of perspectives to be representative of national cultures as a whole; however, there appear to be some links to the data gathered from the outer systems.

Comparing the data gathered from both the countries laid out above, there were suggestions that creativity is not as well-valued as it should be in either culture. This seems to reflect the historical data that show a conflict surrounding its role in education in both countries. Owing to the greater emphasis placed on creativity in both the English curriculum and education history, it might be expected that the English practitioners would be more positive about the national cultural perspective, however they only seemed more positive about their ability to counteract such perspectives.

### *What are the prevailing policy approaches to early years education and creativity in each country?*

This was not a section that particularly focused on curriculum content, though it did ask the practitioners how official curriculum guidance affected their approach to fostering creativity and whether this guidance harmonised with their own views about creativity. As with their opinions about national cultural perspectives on creativity in education, practitioners from both countries felt that policy around early years education and creativity did not give it sufficient importance. The English practitioners felt that it had the potential to be constraining in terms of their ability to pursue what was best for the individual children in their care, the Catalan practitioners felt specifically that their curriculum focused on the wrong areas, the 'Maria' subjects as Practitioner A - Lloc A called them.

*How do these cultural and policy approaches translate to impact on the fostering of creativity in the early years setting?*

There was a marked difference in how well practitioners felt that they could foster creativity within the parameters of their national culture and policy. Though, as outlined above, neither group felt that creativity was sufficiently valued in their country, the English practitioners generally felt that they personally were able to make the curriculum work for them. Interestingly, this was not seen as a quality of the curriculum, rather of their own ability. Conversely, the Catalan practitioners blamed the curriculum for preventing them from fostering creativity effectively, though one did acknowledge that this might be an excuse. This pattern appeared to be mirrored by the findings from the observations: the English settings scored more frequently and more consistently for Cremin et al.'s (2006 in Craft, 2008) core features of learners' and teachers' engagement. Even though the English practitioners felt that it was their personal skills that helped them to foster creativity, it must be acknowledged that the curriculum guidance for the EYFS (DfE, 2012a) places a considerable emphasis on giving opportunities, guiding, exploring, playing and working from children's interests. Without these approaches taking place in the classroom, many of the core features would not necessarily be present.

It was interesting that the Catalan professionals felt constrained by their curriculum, when looking at the *Capacitats* (Departament d'Educació, 2008) outlined in that document, they bore no such resemblance to the complained about 'Maria' subjects. Perhaps there was something in Profesora B - Lloc A's comments about reality and fiction: either there is a cultural perspective of what a curriculum should be that is leading to a focus on the 'Maria' subjects as opposed to the more developmental approach outlined in the Decret 181/2008 (Departament d'Educació, 2008), or the autonomy granted to education providers is leading schools to impose a more academic approach on their nursery classes. It is true that the Catalan document views play and work as distinct areas, however actual practice and practitioners' knowledge appears to diverge from the policy.

*What degrees of difference are there in the actual fostering of creativity in early years settings between the two countries?*

The measurements of Cremin et al.'s (2006 in Craft, 2008) core features of learners' and teachers' engagement during the observations in both countries revealed a distinct difference. The English settings scored better (up to twice as much in some cases) for almost all of the features, though the Catalan settings were much nearer with *Immersion in a loving*

*environment*. The appearance of these features during the English observations was also more likely to be consistent throughout the observations as opposed to isolated incidents. In England, Setting A did better than Setting B on average, while in Catalonia Lloc A did better than Lloc B. If Craft's (2008) contention that these are indicative of the right conditions for creativity is correct, then these results indicate that the English settings are fostering creativity more effectively.

...

The data explored in this section revealed a wider gap in terms of how the settings in each country go about fostering creativity in the early years than might have been expected from much of the documentary data. Returning to those superordinate themes highlighted earlier in this section, *Knowledge* and *Environment*, there were some unexpected factors to be found. Firstly, levels of training in themselves were no guarantee of a creativity-friendly approach: Practitioner B - Setting A had the lowest level of qualification, but one of the better levels of comprehension of the subject and appeared to value it most highly. Secondly, levels of experience of working with children were at roughly similar levels and yet the degree to which creativity was fostered in each country was rather different. It would appear then that the wider national systems do have a powerful impact upon how creativity is fostered in the early years setting. What this section has identified is that working out which of those systems has the strongest effect is not so simple. Practice in England appears to reflect the curriculum, but in Catalonia the reverse is true.



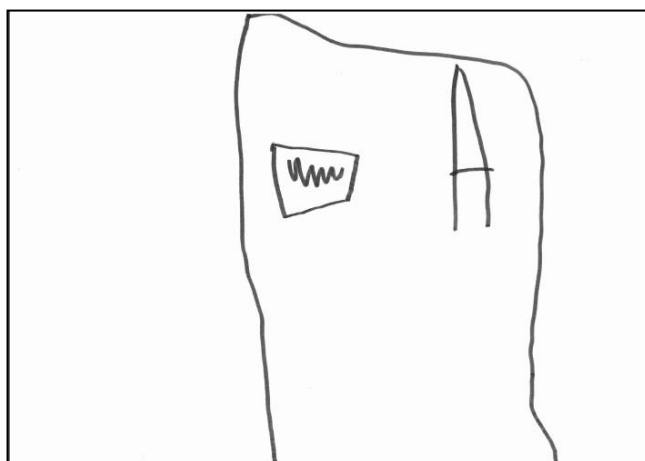
### **Individual – the children's experiences.**

This part of the system is concerned with what is happening for the individual children within each approach. The research carried out for this section has been undertaken to support the question raised in the previous one: is the practice in the setting conducive to creativity? The data in that section relied upon my observation and interpretation of what was happening, which made it open to suggestions of subjectivity. It was hoped that by getting the children to talk about their experiences themselves, it would be possible to establish whether they felt that their needs were being met, was their creativity being cultivated in the setting? It was not

feasible to gather data from all the children about their individual experiences, therefore a sample of three were taken from each setting. These samples were largely self-selecting in that the children who took part were those who had responded with interest to my presence or to my activities and accepted my invitation to participate.

Using data gathered from walking tours and map-making by the children, this section attempts to establish whether the needs of these children regarding their creative processes were being met by the practice in each setting. This will be done by examining what took place using the literature outlined in Chapter 2 and by recording the presence of Cremin et al.'s (2006 in Craft, 2008) core features of learners' and teachers' engagement once again (information which will appear in summary tables at the end of each section). It should be recognised, however, that what happened during these activities cannot be considered representative of normal practice in the setting, but there may be some clues to pick up from the children about what happens usually. For this reason, evidence of the features taking place on the tour and inferences about them evidence occurring in more general practice have been separated. These inferences might include hints the children give about what usually happens or by clues given by staff members who might be interacted with during the tour.

#### **Nena O – Lloc A.**



**Figure 9 - Nena O's Map.**

The child who drew this map was a quiet-seeming girl who had demonstrated great interest in my presence from the beginning. She was from a family of North-African immigrants and her teachers said that she did not speak much. It was certainly true that she did not have a wide vocabulary; most objects within the setting were identified simply as 'toys', she preferred to demonstrate the affordances of a space or resource rather than to explain and her spoken

answers, when given were usually of just one word. We began the tour as the rest of her class were doing a psychomotricity session, so many of the areas were empty. She moved quite quickly through the indoor spaces and their contents. When asked which was her favourite area and thing to play with whilst in the area devoted to 'racons', she replied 'the spades'. There were no spades to be seen in this area, when asked where they were, the child replied 'on the patio' and proceeded to lead the way outside to the deserted play area – all of her classmates were in their classroom. She went directly to a plastic chest which was full of sand toys and when asked what she did with those toys, she took out a bucket and spade, went over to the digging area and began to dig in the sand, filling up the bucket. She was immediately engrossed in her task, to the point where she did not immediately hear any further questions, though she was happy to give simple replies about her activities. This was the longest part of the tour by far, and she sat there making variously 'housies' and 'mountains' by the same process of filling the bucket and tipping it out, smiling and showing me her work.

Returning inside, she returned to the more perfunctory style of tour she had demonstrated before. Asked what her favourite thing in the classroom was, she started heading for the door again and when questioned about this, she agreed that she had been about to go back to the playground again. The map that she drew is a beautifully clear representation of how she feels about her nursery class and her experiences within it. The three lines around the outside is the school itself, the small rectangle is the sandpit - coloured in to show that it is full of sand – and finally there is the letter 'A', which she says is 'a name', something that the class spends a lot of time learning how to do.

Her picture perfectly illustrates both the one thing that she would like to be doing and the one thing that she is mostly doing. Was her creativity being fostered? Nena O has been able to tell her story through the tour and map-making, now I would like to propose a reading of it using an important element of the theory around creativity and young children. This child displayed strong interests in one specific area, and the type of repeated behaviour that marks a schema, which Duffy (2006) strongly connects to the creative process. It is true that Nena O is able to access the activity she enjoys in her setting, though this access is confined to one specific part of the day and dependent upon the weather. Bruce (2011) says that creative ideas need to be gathered, prepared and incubated – in other words they require time. While Nena O's creativity is not exactly being stifled, perhaps time and freedom to pursue her interests would enable her to develop and explore her ideas more fully.

	Evidence during the tour?	Evidence about practice?
<b>Posing Questions</b>	Yes	No
<b>Play</b>	Yes	Restricted
<b>Immersion in a Loving Environment</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>No</b>
<b>Innovation</b>	Yes	No
<b>Being Imaginative</b>	No	No
<b>Self-determination and Risk-taking</b>	Yes	No

Table 5 - Evidence of the core features from Nena O.

**Nen P – Lloc A.**

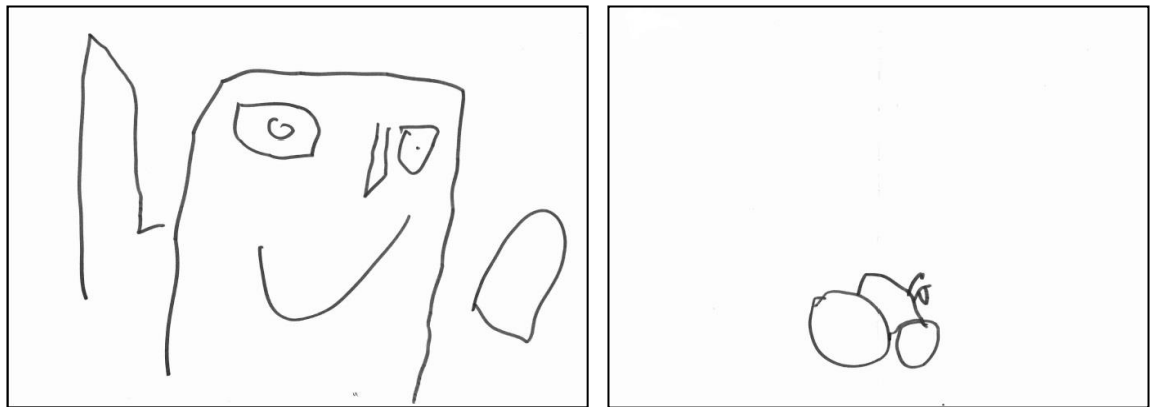


Figure 10 - Nen P's Map.

This child was a boy from a local Catalan family. When we started the tour, the class were outside having playtime, so we started by exploring the playground area. Nen P was quite assertive on his tour, with firm ideas about where we would go next. He had his own names for some equipment, reflecting his interpretations of their uses: climbing frames were variously 'hills' or 'houses'. During the outside part of the tour, he became engrossed in mark-making with a spade on the sandy floor, saying that he was making 'letters'. On questioning, he explained that his favourite thing was 'the car', by which he meant a small plastic digger, though it appeared his favourite activity with this toy was to bury it carefully. Once inside, still carrying the spade in spite of his teacher's instruction to leave it outside, Nen P proceeded to demonstrate all the toys in the 'racons' area, switching items on, moving the component parts, or showing their correct usage, ensuring that no item was missed in the process.

On being asked what his favourite item was in that room, he picked up a child-sized broom and began to sweep vigorously, though he soon moved onto other role-play items. Inside the classroom itself, the process was repeated, though in a yet more cursory manner. He identified the toy tractors as being his favourite item within the classroom and played with them for a few minutes before continuing his demonstration of the classroom contents. Having completed the tour that he wished to give, he suddenly turned and headed for the door, though he returned when asked if he would mind drawing a map. He began to draw a rectangle, though he said it was in actual fact a 'festalma' which was from 'the telly'. As he was drawing, he was asked what other things he liked about his school, he thought and said 'ummm – the shapes'. When it was suggested that he draw some of his favourite things from school such as the vehicles he had pointed out, he said 'no. This is the festalma'. Having carefully completed drawing this figure, he turned over the page and drew a small object with two circles that appeared to be a car. Having finished the picture, he gave it to me saying 'this is yours'. I praised his picture and asked as a final question if there was anything he did not like about his school, he gestured at the papers on his table and said 'well I don't like this', I thanked him; he then put away the things he used, picked up his spade and went back outside.

'Reading' Nen P's story was a little more complex; his use of language was more developed than Nena O, which could obscure his narrative as his words could often contradict his actions. Part of this may be his reaction to the task he had been set: he had been asked to identify his favourite things, perhaps he felt obliged to provide an answer rather than examining his real interests. He identified vehicles twice as his favourite thing, yet kept the spade with him at all times, using it to manipulate and mark-make upon his environment. This practice could indicate that this item had become a 'transitional object' for him: this is a concept developed from Winnicott (1971) where the child carries an object that represents for them a soothing state and Nen P clearly preferred being outside. He also appeared to enjoy mark-making in that environment, but was very clear that he did not enjoy similar activities inside at a table and on paper. It was unfortunate that the research methods unwittingly put the child in the position of taking part in an activity he professed not to like, he was either too polite or too well-trained not to participate, and did not express his real feelings until he was expressly given the chance to do so. As with Nena O, Nen P's favoured activities had restricted access, whereas usual practice centred on activities the child professed to dislike. His opinions are important here, Bruner (1962) suggests that creativity requires fun - can Nen P develop his creativity within a framework he does not enjoy?



	Evidence during the tour?	Evidence about practice?
Posing Questions	Yes	No
Play	Yes	Restricted
Immersion in a Loving Environment	No	No
Innovation	Yes	No
Being Imaginative	No	No
Self-determination and Risk-taking	Yes	No

Table 6 - Evidence of the core features from Nen P.

#### Nena Q – Lloc A.



Figure 11 - Nena Q's Map.

This vibrant map was produced by one of the younger girls in the setting. She had a non-identical twin-brother in the class and they were from a Catalan family from the local area. The twins had not spent much time away from their family when they first came to the nursery class and the practitioners mentioned that they had struggled a little emotionally. However, the impression that Nena Q gave throughout the tour was of an open and sociable character who relished the opportunity to show someone around her setting. This map prominently features a person and is decorated with the names of her classmates, displaying an interest in the people around her that was reflected by her tour. Throughout this she would relate aspects of the setting to the people in it, showing me every single child's drawer, pointing out where certain people sat, greeting or mentioning passing children and explaining the list of names on the wall from which the 'protagonist' of the week would be chosen. Indeed, Nena Q was very aware of the activities that had been taking place in the setting and gave detailed

explanations of what they would do, though often with more emphasis on whom she would do the activity with as opposed to the activity content.

Nena Q was very imaginative in her explanations, which often comprised of little stories about drawings she had made or objects she found around the setting: 'This is a fish. It comes from the sea. And it comes from the sea and there's just a boy and he eats it but ... with chips'. Having moved into the area outside the classroom dedicated to 'racons', she would offer a practical demonstration of each toy, often imagining herself into the role of the person who might typically use such an object in the real world. She did not dwell too long in any particular area, even admonishing me for focusing on one thing when there were more things to look at. Outside, she led me all over the space, running about and once again showing me every object she could see and providing snippets of the games that might be played with them. She demonstrated all of the climbing frames and even showed me the sand that covered the floor.

By far the largest part of the tour was actually the map-making activity, which took the same length of time again. She chose a range of colours insisted on writing her name on the paper before she began, identifying the letters, which she had written very carefully, as she went. The map that she drew focused on the outdoor area, she drew both rain and sun, though when asked what else there was in her school, she said 'there are names' and began to write the names of her classmates, beginning with her brother; where she could not remember the names, she ran to get them from the wall. The red figure in the middle of the picture is a slide, but it may also be a volcano, and the picture contains several spots which represent puddles. The word for puddle in Spanish – *charco* – may also mean 'pond', which reminded her of the pond in the farm story they had been doing in class and lead her to sing me the chorus of its associated song. Nena Q added a detailed picture of a child and coloured the whole map carefully, crossing the room to get pencil crayons to use too. She continued to colour and add more names and probably would have continued to do so had I not had to drop several heavy hints about having to join the rest of her class in the allotment.

Reading Nena Q's map and tour, she appears to have assimilated well the teaching and learning elements that had been planned into the class: their current story-topic, the class activities and the focus on name-writing. People, particularly her classmates, seem to be important to her and while this may not seem to have a direct connection with creativity; Cremin et al. (2006 in Craft, 2008) do highlight the importance of the social environment and the child's comfort within it as one of their core features for promoting creativity – *Immersion in a loving environment*. Socially at least, Nena Q feels well-supported, which is particularly

good considering her beginnings at the setting. Nena Q's determination to show me everything in the setting did not allow for her to display any schema-type behaviour, but it was interesting the time and dedication she poured into her map-making. The tour had actually begun by her showing me the drawings that she had in her drawer, and she lavished a full fifteen minutes on her map, in contrast to the rather whistle-stop tour she had conducted. Drawing and writing were clearly activities she relished, and had been granted the opportunity to carry out in her setting. The question, as with the other children in this setting, lies in the extent to which she was able to carry out these activities and the degree of liberty she was allowed with them. The observations rather indicated that such activities would be targeted towards a set goal in a finite time, with freedom to experiment and follow interests being granted only to those who completed the task before the allotted time was up.

	<b>Evidence during the tour?</b>	<b>Evidence about practice?</b>
<b>Posing Questions</b>	Yes	No
<b>Play</b>	Yes	Restricted
<b>Immersion in a Loving Environment</b>	Yes	Yes
<b>Innovation</b>	Yes	No
<b>Being Imaginative</b>	Yes	No
<b>Self-determination and Risk-taking</b>	Yes	No

**Table 7 - Evidence of the core features from Nena Q.**

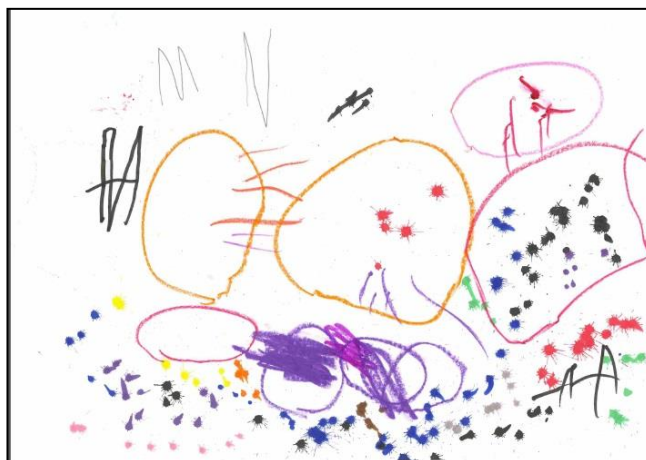


Figure 12 - Nena R's Map.

The child who drew this vivid map was a local girl from a Romany (*Gitano* in Spanish) family. This put her a little at odds with her classmates (who were also generally better off economically), partly because she had been brought up favouring Castilian Spanish over Catalan. She was very communicative, however, and demonstrated considerable facility in both languages at the time of the visit. She could be a little more assertive than many of the other children and her vocabulary occasionally included expressions that would not be considered suitable for children. Though not explicitly apparent during the time as I spent at the school, it should be noted that as with many other countries across the world, discrimination against this particular group is a serious problem in Spanish society (Fundación Secretariado Gitano, 2012). Nena R took to the tour and map-making with gusto, though she started uncharacteristically quietly, possibly as a result of being recorded, using one-word answers and gestures to indicate items of interest. She soon found her voice, however and was chatty and humorous; she did not like to be questioned though and would often answer 'why not' if asked why she did something.

As it was break-time, we began the tour outside. Nena R was rather taken with the natural elements of the outside area: stones, shells, pinecones and ants. She was keen to describe and demonstrate the qualities of these items to me, picking them up and wanting me to hold them and taking them to share her discovery with the other, appreciative, adults. She was rather less keen, however on sharing with other children, telling them off if they got in her way. Inspecting the ants and picking them up took up the largest part of the tour, she found them fascinating and was concerned about them 'escaping'. In fact when asked if she wanted to

show me her classroom, she quite honestly answered 'no', though her teacher then told her to go inside. Once inside, Nena R proceeded to give a cursory guide to the resources then got very interested in identifying items and drawers that belonged to the children in her class, going through all the labels and testing my own reading skills. Nena R accessed materials around the room to show me, though from the position of these things it was clear that not all these items were for general access and she found it amusing to change the order of some photographs on the wall. On being asked what her favourite thing in the setting was, she took the opportunity to get her doll from her backpack that she had been repeatedly told to put away that day.

As she began to draw, she avoided initial questions about what she was drawing, she admitted that the circles she was drawing might be from her school, but when asked to identify them she said 'They're drawings' following with 'The circles are real drawings'. After adding some lines to the middle drawing, she said 'You are this one' then added some details to another, which she identified as one of classmates with whom she had recently been searching for ants. The splodges are 'because it's raining', though she would not be drawn on why this was the case. Other circles became other classmates and when I remarked that she had lots of friends at school she drawled 'of course'. Nena R had been as engrossed in this activity as she had been with the ants but when she decided that she needed more types of media to continue her picture, her attention shifted to emptying the shelves of all the pens and crayons until it was pointed out that her teacher would not be happy with this strategy. She was not keen on putting them back and offered to hide them all in her backpack whilst smiling cheekily. She finished her picture with a 'M' for her name, some more splodges and an ant. An end was finally put to her splodging by her teacher who wanted to resume the class.

At several points during the tour and the map-making activities, Nena R was observed enacting behaviour that is strongly associated with a transporting schema (Duffy, 2006): moving items from their places, taking things to adults, even interrupting her map-making to do so. It was also fairly clear from these activities and from observation of practice that these activities were not always accepted in class, the activities themselves were static and Nena R was observed being stopped from bringing her doll into class, putting items into her backpack and getting down items that the teacher had put away. These actions were all considered to be against class rules and therefore bad behaviour, though schema theory suggests that this would be a misreading of her intentions, she is simply exploring the potentials of her environment (Duffy, 2006). Nena R only really had the liberty to exercise her schema-related

behaviour when she was outside, where the finding and transporting of items was met with encouragement from the adults. This is a concern considering that the balance of Nena R's time is spent in the classroom, perhaps she may begin to associate her creative impulses with negative feedback, which over time may inhibit her. It is interesting to note that many early years researchers who focus on creativity are aware that practitioners can confuse creativity with being troublesome or causing chaos (e.g. Bruce, 2011; Duffy, 2006). Writing about the British system, Duffy (2006) states that practitioners are supported in facilitating children's creative processes by the frameworks and guidance they use. This would seem to suggest that there is insufficient support directed at this area for the Catalan teachers.

	Evidence during the tour?	Evidence about practice?
Posing Questions	Yes	No
Play	Yes	Restricted
Immersion in a Loving Environment	Yes	Yes
Innovation	Yes	No
Being Imaginative	No	No
Self-determination and Risk-taking	Yes	No

Table 8 - Evidence of the core features from Nena R.

#### Nena S – Lloc B.

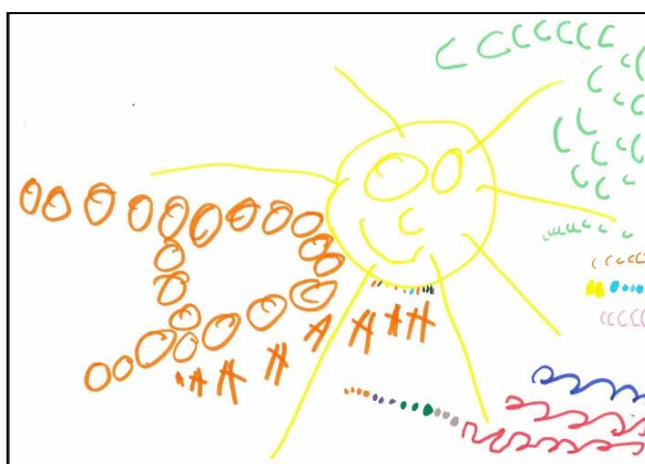


Figure 13 - Nena S's Map.

The creator of this map was another girl, friend and occasional nemesis of Nena R. She was taller than her classmates, though she was amongst the younger age group, and from a local

Catalan family. Though her map depicts a large sun, she did not choose to dedicate much of the tour to the outside area. It is difficult to draw a definitive conclusion from this: perhaps she preferred to be inside, perhaps she preferred to be inside at that time when her classmates were outside or perhaps as the map-making had occurred in the middle of the tour, she had already spent half an hour with me and had lost interest in showing me about. The tour began in the classroom, where she showed me her teacher's desk. She was quite quiet and had to be asked to identify the things that she was showing me, which she did with whispered one-word answers.

She remained fairly quiet for most of the tour, which contrasted with her usual manner with the other children. We were interrupted continually by Nena R on various pretexts, along with several other children who wanted to talk to me or were just curious about what we were doing. She showed me her drawer, her place, the bathroom and the drinking water, the blackboard which they were allowed to draw on though she did not really demonstrate great enthusiasm for much of these items. She offered to show me her name, which she proceeded to write carefully and rather than proceeding with the tour, she continued to draw, so she was offered the chance to draw her map at that moment instead. Her first drawing was actually of a fair, but before we could get onto the map, the continued interruptions of Nena R and others meant that we had to change location.

Drawing her map, Nena S was engrossed in her drawing and uninterested in answering my questions about it. She was, however concerned about the continued attempts of the other children to encroach on her activity, which attracted her attention and unfortunately led to a small altercation with Nena R and some other children crowding round until a teacher came to take them back outside. She was asked if she was allowed to draw much in school, to which she replied yes. After having drawn a sun with a multi-coloured 'beard', she stated that she was drawing a train, which looked like a pattern of dots the teacher had drawn on the board earlier and had referred to as a train. When asked what the teacher used these for, she had already moved on to drawing a letter 'the A', yet it should be noted that this drawing was used by the teacher as a means to draw the children's attention to the choosing of the class 'driver', a position that Nena S had been granted that morning. Questions about the other shapes and forms that she drew were also met with silence or one word answers about their name, shape or colour and she did not wish to draw an association between her drawing and her school, even denying that certain elements existed in her school such as 'circles' and 'the beach'. The former denial caused her some amusement when I expressed incredulity that there were no

circles in her school. Towards the end of the drawing, she associated a letter she had drawn with the name of her friend. On finishing, she turned the picture over and signed it on the back using my ballpoint pen.

Nena S was then asked what her favourite place was in her setting; she pointed down the very long and dark corridor and said 'down there'. She was invited to show me this place and she skipped off down the corridor. On the way, I asked her what was down there, and she replied with a full sentence in a much more audible tone of voice 'There are some toys'. She became excited as we approached and giggled, finally announcing 'here!' This was the area devoted to 'racons' and was full of many types of role-play equipment and wheeled toys. It was in darkness and fenced off with plastic barriers. She explained to me 'We play here' and when asked how often they played there she said 'looooooads', though upon questioning she qualified this with twice a week. After this, she skipped back down the corridor, smiling and giggling, showing me the pegs for their rucksacks and where they slept after lunch. For these last 10 minutes of the tour, Nena S was a different character, exhibiting a level of energy and enthusiasm that had not been present before.

Nena S's tour raised one particular issue that would not impact solely upon her experience, but that of other children too. The profile for Lloc B in the previous section highlighted the fact that this was a class of 25 children with frequently only one adult. Part of Nena R and other children's reasons for approaching and interrupting constantly was that they wanted to be involved and for me to pay some attention to them, their actions or the things that they had found. It was interesting that both Nena S and Nena R were frustrated by other children encroaching on their activities during their tours: owing to the staffing, these children were usually treated as a large group and were frequently jostling for space and attention. Bruce (2011) points out that adults are important to children's creative processes as children are more able to express themselves when they feel valued and frequently children's expressions of creativity are very personal. If children are finding it hard to access an adult's attention or a bit of private space, this is therefore likely to impact on the development of their creativity.

Nena S appeared to be concerned with her identity, her place, her drawer, her peg, her name, her role: in the practitioner interviews, her teacher expressed a concern about feeling able to treat children as individuals when there were so many of them (Interview with Profesora A – Lloc B, 2013). The other significant issue was that of the 'racons' area: it is possible that Nena S's happiness at showing me this area was connected to her being away from the rest of the group, but if it was, as she asserted, her favourite area, I did not observe it being used. In an



area such as this, in contrast to the classroom, children would have the opportunity to have fun and to explore, and above all to play; all elements that are recognised as being essential for the creative process (Duffy, 2006).

	Evidence during the tour?	Evidence about practice?
Posing Questions	No	No
Play	No	Restricted
Immersion in a Loving Environment	No	No
Innovation	Yes	No
Being Imaginative	No	No
Self-determination and Risk-taking	Yes	No

Table 9 - Evidence of the core features from Nena S.

Nen T – Lloc B.



Figure 14 - Nen T's Map.

This dramatic image represents the map of a half-French, half-Catalan boy in the class. He was officially bilingual in this sense, unlike the traditional Catalan/Castilian bilingual status of the majority of the children. Throughout the tour, I frequently had problems understanding what he was saying, which I was concerned was down to my somewhat rusty Catalan. I speak Castilian but understand Catalan, therefore I would usually speak Castilian and the children would understand this perfectly but respond in either or both languages. This is quite a normal state of affairs in Catalonia where one family member and another may have a conversation whilst both speaking different languages: something Baker (1996, in Whitehead, 2007) refers to as *societal bilingualism*. On listening to the tape, however, Nen T speaks very softly and also

tends to run sounds together so that they sound like speech, but it is actually an approximation rather than a recognisable language. These speech sounds would then feature single words or short phrases, usually in Catalan, but also in Castilian from time to time. Whitehead (2007) suggests that bilingualism, or in this case multilingualism is not confined to that perfect, balanced fluency in two languages: children in particular may have changing competences and many of the apparent 'mistakes' they may make are actually part of their strategies for language learning. Playing with language sounds, as Nen T appears to be doing by mimicking speech, reflects his linguistic sensitivity (Whitehead, 2007); he just has not reached full fluency yet. Through repetition and gestures, however, we were able to communicate effectively.

The tour began outside, at a break time again so there were many other children around. Once again, other children were crowding around us, making it more difficult to understand what Nen T was saying. This was exacerbated by the fact that some of the other children in the group, including Nena R and Nena S, seemed to be in the habit of answering Nen T's questions for him. These children would continue to interrupt us throughout the tour. He was keen that I should recognise the size of the outdoor area, which was indeed extensive, and was happy once I had understood his meaning. In spite of the interruptions, Nen T expressed that he wanted to show me the sand, which the whole area was floored with, and began to dig in it. On being asked what he was looking for, he said 'the fine sand', which he was putting in a pile. When the children left him alone, Nen T was quite keen to make conversation, remarking to me as he was digging that 'the sun's shining' and pointing out that there was no sun under the trees. The other comment that he had to make on the outside area was that 'the children are playing'.

Touring the classroom, Nen T tried to take some sand inside with him, until he was asked to leave it at the door. He remarked upon the lights once we were inside and the size of a piece of furniture 'it's big', but appeared to draw a blank when asked what his favourite thing in the room was. When asked if his favourite thing was actually being outside he agreed enthusiastically and did not identify any other place inside the building as worth visiting. Nen T took to the map drawing decisively, choosing brown, which he said was the sand, then yellow to represent the sun. He ended with two more colours, black and purple, which he said represented 'fire' and a 'fish'. He enjoyed the act of colouring, going over the same area repeatedly, this made a small hole in his picture, which he was worried about, but reassured by my assertion that it was just fine.

Nen T, much like many of the other children so far, appeared to show a strong preference for the outside area and incorporated elements of the outdoors into his map. It was interesting to see how Nen T, like Nen P tried to carry elements of the outside in with him: his preference for the outside area once again suggesting the use of a transitional object (Winnicott, 1971) for comfort. In terms of this child's creative expressions, it appears that he is only truly able to be in an environment most suited to his requirements at limited points in the day, fewer if the weather is bad, and as noted in Nena S's tour, it is difficult for him to be himself in that space when he is crowded and interrupted by other children.

	<b>Evidence during the tour?</b>	<b>Evidence about practice?</b>
<b>Posing Questions</b>	Yes	No
<b>Play</b>	Yes	Restricted
<b>Immersion in a Loving Environment</b>	No	No
<b>Innovation</b>	No	No
<b>Being Imaginative</b>	No	No
<b>Self-determination and Risk-taking</b>	Yes	No

**Table 10 - Evidence of the core features from Nen T.**

#### **Child U – Setting A.**



**Figure 15 - Child U's Map.**

This map was drawn by an English girl who approached me on the first day of the visit. She was one of the younger ones in the age bracket, but confident and articulate. After lunch, the children who have stayed to eat are taken out to play in a special area of the setting called 'the meadow'. This allows the children who only attend the afternoon session to enter into a calm

environment inside the building and gives the lunchtime children a chance to vent some energy. They are also made to feel that they are doing something that is special to them, enhanced by the fact that the practitioners bring out a big flask of hot-chocolate for them to enjoy. This area is quite natural with rocks and long grass, the practitioners have brought out a box of plastic animals which they have hidden around the extensive area for the children to find as well as a box of long floaty fabrics, but in general the children are running about and exploring the area on their own terms.

The first thing that Child U remarked upon were the 'things all over' a rock. She wanted me to lift this up so she could take a better look and when asked if she could identify what the things were, she called them ants and correctly identified the slug that was with them. Child U appeared to relish the chance for conversation and asked me lots of questions about why I thought the way I did or my life in general, or why things happened the way they did. We were interrupted in our tour by other children from time to time, but having satisfied their curiosity, they tended to drift off. Having looked at the bugs, Child U wanted to show me the wildflowers that were growing in the meadow and explained 'It's been raining ... so it's really slippy' as we picked our way across the steep and rocky terrain. Another bug was found by the flowers, which elicited more questions, but she soon lead me across the meadow, determined to give me a comprehensive tour of the space.

She was full of commentary of the different places we visited 'these (steps) are really new', 'down here there's stones (for sitting on)', 'that tree has been grown'. She pointed out her classmates 'these are all the children' and interacted with the environment in different ways according to its qualities such as scuffing her feet through the gravel on the path. Her physical interactions with the environment caused her to fall and bump her knee. She did not seem bothered by the accident itself, this was the second bump that she had on the tour, but the dirt it had left on her tights 'These were new tights!', which greatly upset her. She was so upset about this that we had to suspend the tour. She was concerned that her mummy would be upset and had to be reassured by myself and another member of staff that we were sure that her mother would be able to wash that dirt out.

We resumed the tour after she had calmed down, which took a little while, remaining in the same area. She showed me a drainpipe, pointing out the cobweb on it and where the water ran out from, then being sure that we had seen everything of importance in that area, we moved into the central play area that is next to the building. By this time, the afternoon children had come out and were playing in this area too, Child U pointed out one of these

children as we went through saying 'This is (another child). Do you know (another child) now?' During the tour, Child U told me that 'I like going inside a bit and I like to go outside'. She continued to give me a comprehensive tour of the outside and the different areas and resources within it, pausing only to chat to another practitioner with whom she reiterated her worries about her tights. She was very clear about which areas were used for which activities and knew the names that they had been designated. She was particularly keen to demonstrate to me the water play and the rill that ran right through the outside area, all the way back to the meadow.

Moving inside, she was able to explain certain aspects of setting procedures to me, such as the photographs the children had to stick on a board by the door to show that they had gone to play outside. As before, she gave a very comprehensive tour of the different areas, their contents and their uses, sometimes physically demonstrating these, though once again she was drawn to the water play. Here she opted to temporarily relinquish her role as guide, saying to me 'you can watch me play'. She spent some time here, filling receptacles with the glittery water, remarking on how it stuck to her hands, and invited me to play with her, informing me that I ought to put an apron on to play there. As we played and Child U explained to me what she was doing and why, she asked me if I was going to visit her mummy's bar after we had finished. She was very engaged in this activity, which took up the largest part of the tour. The tour resumed after she had carefully washed and dried her hands and continued to take a comprehensive approach, pausing to play with items or areas of particular interest such as the sensory equipment and the dressing-up. Child U continued to exhibit understanding of the procedures to be used around the setting and respect for its contents by tidying up after herself. It should be remarked upon that although the setting ethos was very much free-flow for the majority of the day, it was never messy or chaotic.

Child U spent little time drawing her map, but she was very decisive about what it should include. She focused immediately on drawing the water in the middle, which she said was her favourite thing, then she drew the shoes from the dressing-up area to the right and an outer circle which represented the meadow. The blue at the top right was her name. This tour and map appeared to show that in nursery, Child U feels that her needs connected to the expression of her creativity are being adequately met. Water was a recurring theme throughout the tour and was the first thing that she drew and in this setting, aside from meals and set circle-times, she has free access to several activities, indoors and out that allow her to experiment with this medium. These activities were set out in special areas devoted to water

play, which were a permanent feature of everyday practice - the setting provides an environment that incorporates a wide-range of activities at all times.

It may seem that the one threat to Child U's creative expression may be from outside the setting: her profound upset about the dirt on her tights coupled with her careful use of an apron and hand washing after a messy activity could suggest a concern at home about her getting in a mess. Duffy (2006) highlights the effect that the values and beliefs that parents have towards creative activities can have on a child's experiences: without being shown the effects on concentration and deepening understanding, the 'messy' results such as dirt and ruined clothes may appear to parents to be the only results of such activities, Duffy (2006) advocates the importance of collaborating with parents to help challenge their deeply held beliefs, showing them the importance of such activities to their child's development. The topic of distrust or misunderstanding of creative activities was a feature of several of the interviews with English practitioners (e.g. Interview with Practitioner A - Setting B, 2014), though it seemed to be an issue that both settings were endeavouring to tackle as part of their ongoing plans.

	<b>Evidence during the tour?</b>	<b>Evidence about practice?</b>
<b>Posing Questions</b>	Yes	No
<b>Play</b>	Yes	Yes
<b>Immersion in a Loving Environment</b>	Yes	Yes
<b>Innovation</b>	No	No
<b>Being Imaginative</b>	No	No
<b>Self-determination and Risk-taking</b>	Yes	No

**Table 11 - Evidence of the core features from Child U.**

### Child V - Setting A.



Figure 16 - Child V's Map.

This picture was drawn by an English girl of four years of age. She was an able if diffident speaker though keen to communicate about herself, beginning the tour by showing me an item she had got from her father who had been in Ireland. Despite informing me that the best things in nursery were inside, the tour began outside, where the greater part of the tour was spent. She took me first to the sandpit, which in this setting is a large area of about 8 x 3 metres enclosed by a log-frame and cargo-netting. She wanted to show me a construction in there that she had recently made from sand, rocks and sticks, explaining 'this is my desert island'. This large creation also includes a representation of the sea around it and she explained that an adult had helped her to build it though she had got the idea for it herself as she had seen one on holiday 'in Holiday land'. She had asked the adult if they could build it and the adult had said it was a good idea. Throughout the tour, Child V made conversation about herself, things that had happened in the setting or asked questions about me.

Like Child U, she was also very clear about what the different areas were called around the nursery, when they would be used how, they would be used and the items within them. Interestingly, when asked about the different areas outside, she pointed out where sticks could be got from and where stones could be found; the key elements in her building project. She also told me about where she had fallen over recently, but how it was now all better. As she conducted the tour, she took advantage of the different affordances provided by the space: climbing the frame and steps, sliding down the slide, running on the flat, clear area. As we moved back towards the building, she pointed out the water play, the area for putting on

wellingtons if it is muddy and explained the photo board for children who wanted to play outside.

Once inside, the tour became a little more cursory, simply pointing out the areas and giving a brief explanation or demonstration of what could be done in them, including procedure such as wearing an apron or putting on a badge to play in certain areas. Some areas captured her attention for a little longer than others: the water play provoked more explanation than other areas, and in the dressing up area where another child was trying on shoes, Child V stopped for a brief chat with him about which shoes he was going to put on. She spent most time inside showing me the sensory area, eager for me to experience the effects of all of the different items in that space: the kaleidoscopes, the light-boxes and the translucent and colourful objects that could be placed on top of them. On being asked, she affirmed that this was her favourite place and ensured that we put everything back when we left the area. She finished the tour by briefly pointing out two remaining areas that she had not covered and then agreed to draw a map. The first thing that she drew was a flower from outside in the centre of the page. She was concerned that she did not know how to draw her nursery, but when told that she could draw the things that she wanted from nursery, she opted for a 'funny face' because 'all the children' have funny faces in nursery. She wanted to include the water play and thought that she might go and play with the water once she had finished drawing, though this became a lake in her map.

Reading into Child V's map and tour, once again a picture was formed of a child who feels well-supported in their creative expressions. Aside from the well-resourced and accessible environment remarked upon in the analysis of Child U's experience, Child V's tour revealed the supportive role of the adults in enabling a child to realise their ideas. Much of the literature on creativity in the early years talks about the importance of adults providing the right level of help at the right time (e.g. Bruce, 2011; Craft, 2008). Here the child had the creative concept, but lacked the means to realize it practically, the adult did not build the island for Child V, but supported and assisted her to do so. This difference is important for the continuing development of her creativity, both Bruce (2011) and Gardner (2006) talk about the importance of developing practical skills and techniques alongside creative thinking: without such tools, the child may become frustrated in their creative processes as they struggle to make their ideas reality. In this example, Child V has been supported in realizing her ideas, but has also been armed with the means to develop her ideas with a greater degree of autonomy in the future.



	Evidence during the tour?	Evidence about practice?
Posing Questions	Yes	No
Play	Yes	Yes
Immersion in a Loving Environment	Yes	Yes
Innovation	Yes	No
Being Imaginative	No	No
Self-determination and Risk-taking	Yes	Yes

Table 12 - Evidence of the core features from Child V.

#### Child W -Setting A.

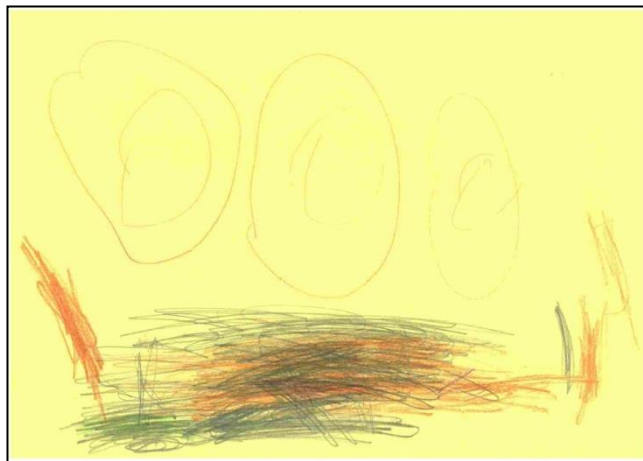


Figure 17 - Child W's Map.

This map was the work of an English boy aged four who had been attending the setting for just a couple of months. He was a very able communicator, mature and focused. Though he seemed to manage the sessions very well, the practitioners had informed me that he had struggled on the days when he was not picked up at lunchtime, which manifested itself in becoming upset and refusing to eat. In order to combat this, the cook had taken to including Child W in planning the lunchtime menus, which he had apparently responded really well to. He had very graciously agreed to show me around the setting, but it seems that he may have been polite rather than keen in doing so. It transpired after an extremely brief indoor tour of less than two minutes, that he had only come inside to get some things he needed for a project he was working on outside. He was happy to take me outside, but he needed to retrieve these items first. As we left the building he carefully pointed out and explained things

he felt I might need to know, again remarking on the photo board for children playing outside, showing me the loos and the different play areas.

Once outside, it transpired that Child W had brought a stick, a scrap of paper and some sticky tape with which a waiting practitioner was going to help him fashion a flag for the pirate ship he had been building out of sand. The practitioner was careful to give minimal assistance so that Child W would have to perform the key actions such as wrapping the tape around the pole by himself. When asked what the most important thing outside was he immediately replied 'Digging. Because it's quite hard to dig down by the sides'. He noted that you needed to be quite strong to dig. He continued to build his pirate ship and informed me 'I'm going to be a pirate when I'm grown up', complete, he hoped, with a patch, a treasure chest and a sword. He stressed that he would be a good pirate and intended to walk the plank and have a hook. It was interesting to see that when he was asked questions about what lay beyond the sandpit, his focus remained inside it and he talked about the purposes of the boundaries of the sandpit. After clarification, and still engrossed in his work he affirmed that it was 'a meadow' where they sometimes went and sometimes did not. After some prompting from the practitioner who had been helping with the ship, he explained that he went there on long days after he had had his dinner.

He was so engrossed in his ship-building that it was agreed that he could do his map-making at a later point in the day. When he sat down to do this, the aspects that he included in the map reflected his experiences his interests and concerns. He started by drawing building blocks that were represented by the circles - building was an activity he enjoyed both indoors and out. The marks on the page were described as the meadow, particularly its slope, which he wanted to get 'really black' and also the kitchen, which had played such an integral part in settling him into his sessions at nursery. This last element underlines the importance of both the direct and indirect work that practitioners do to promote a child's creativity. The tour clearly illustrated how well the practitioners supported Child W in his overtly creative endeavours, asking him questions, encouraging his ideas and giving him just the right level of assistance to help him to develop his practical skills. Yet what Child W story shows is the importance of taking care of the whole child in order to allow creativity to flourish. As Cremin et al.'s (2006 in Craft, 2008) core features identified, children need to feel safe, secure and loved in order for the conditions for creativity to be met. Without the efforts made by the setting, and particularly the cook, to respect his wishes and take on his suggestions, Child W would be spending large parts of his day upset rather than confidently building pirate ships.

	Evidence during the tour?	Evidence about practice?
Posing Questions	Yes	No
Play	Yes	Yes
Immersion in a Loving Environment	Yes	Yes
Innovation	Yes	Yes
Being Imaginative	Yes	No
Self-determination and Risk-taking	Yes	Yes

Table 13 - Evidence of the core features from Child W.

#### Child X - Setting B.

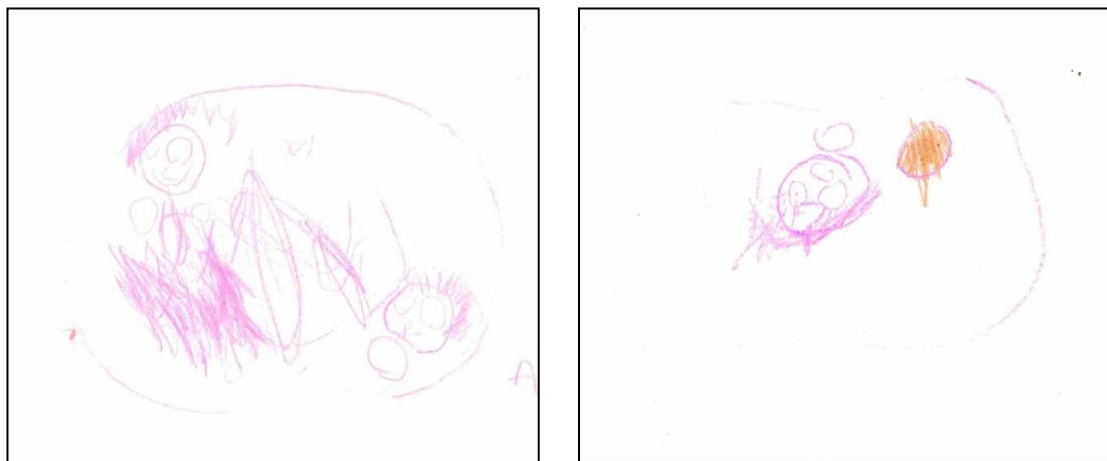


Figure 18 - Child X's Map.

This double-sided picture is the creation of an English girl aged three. She was a cheerful and enthusiastic participant, full of chat and questions and curious about the voice recorder and my project. This was by far the longest tour, of over fifty minutes in length including the map-making. She did not know what she wanted to begin with, so it was suggested that she started outside, to which she happily acquiesced. She led the way across the tarmac in the outdoor area towards the small grassed part where a large hole had been dug near the edge which had filled with rainwater and was surrounded by mud. There were a few items of digging equipment scattered around this area. On being asked what all of this was, Child X replied 'Don't know', but as she picked up a receptacle filled with water and poured it into the hole she squealed 'a waterfall!' She splashed this a few times then informed me 'I want to have welly boots on', so we went back inside to find them as she explained 'it's all squelchy and slimy'. Finding her boots, she also showed me her spare clothes and as she took her shoes off,

she told me that her favourite thing in preschool was the computer, showed me the butterflies on her socks and asked a practitioner if they would come outside and play with her, to which they said yes.

Child X returned immediately to the muddy puddle outside and, answering my questions, she told me that she liked playing with this and that she did not have any mud at home. She extracted some items from the muddy puddle saying 'Look at this!' and pointed toward the surrounding area saying 'It's very slippery there'. She stood up and put her feet into the puddle saying with delight 'Going in the muddy puddle again!' She invited me in, but I had to explain that I did not have the right kind of boots on. This puddle proved to be a draw for other children who wanted to start digging in it whilst Child X was still standing in it, then another, younger child came dashing in from a distance and fell dramatically into the puddle, which put an end to her play in that area. Moving around the outside area, she identified the separate areas and the types of activities that they usually afforded, occasionally demonstrating. From time to time she would pick up objects from the floor, which she would show to me. She gave particular emphasis to the playground on the other side of the fence that was shared with the school. The preschool sometimes used this space, but they could not flow into it owing to the arrangement of gates and bolts that had to be negotiated. Child X explained that she particularly liked that area because 'you can run' and tried to persuade me to take her there, though this was not possible in terms of supervision.

In the sand box she found a plastic dinosaur which she made stamp up and down in the sand, pretending that he was in a muddy puddle. This reminded her of the existence of the real muddy puddle, to which she returned to paddle in and balance around the edge. There was a slide next to the puddle, which attracted her attention. A practitioner spotted her interest and asked her to wait whilst she got a towel to dry it off. She waited patiently, and the practitioner pointed out that it had been raining considerably recently and that she was off to rescue some horses from floodwater later that day. This piqued Child X's interest, who proceeded to ask lots of questions about this. Sadly, it was decided to close the slide, owing to the sheer amount of mud around that area, but Child X seemed to agree with this position entirely, telling me that 'it is very slippery'.

At this point it was decided that any continued play in the muddy puddle would require an all-in-one suit as well as wellingtons, so Child X was sent inside to get one. I took this opportunity to ask her to show me the inside of her preschool. On the way inside, she passed by an arrangement of blocks and planks that had been set up for the children to balance along,

which she did so, remarking on the muddy footprints that she left behind her. Inside, she was greeted by a practitioner who asked what she had been doing, to whom Child X explained all about the muddy puddle. We would occasionally be joined by other children on this part of the tour who had questions or wished to talk to me, but they usually drifted off having satisfied themselves. The inside tour began with some cursory showing about 'This is people ... and these are money' until she found a puzzle, which she asked me to help her with. She did not really need any help with the puzzle apart from encouragement when something did not go right. As she completed the puzzle, she commented on the picture as it formed: 'that's the bus driver ... that's the rest of the baby' or asked questions about what the figures in it might be doing. Having finished the puzzle, she ignored my questions about the rest of the interior, preferring to continue to talk about the puzzle.

She wanted to show me an activity that she had been engaged in that week involving roads, for which she had made a traffic light, having decided that roads needed them. Sadly, the lights could not be located at this moment of time, having emptied out the box of cars, so she moved onto a threading activity. When asked if she was allowed to leave things on the floor that she had thrown out of a box, she considered the question very carefully, and then went to ask a practitioner. They explained to her that it was usually best to put things away after they had been finished with, so she nodded and went to pick them up. In the meantime, the practitioner located her traffic lights and between them they explained the scale of her planned road-building project, which include signs and a roundabout.

Child X spent a long time on her map, which despite her assertions that she did not know what to draw or how to draw it contained a great deal of detail. The map began with the choice of the colour pink with which she made some general marks on the paper to represent the setting: she acknowledged that preschool was mostly blue, but that she would like it to be pink. When asked what she was going to put in preschool, the first thing she said was 'people' and proceeded to draw clear figures that she identified as a staff member and a child. She included the kitchen and identified the names of some of the shapes she was drawing and explained that she was writing her name to the right of her first picture. She included the computer, a hoop and the cupboards which had 'important things' in them. She decided to draw the outside on the other side of her piece of paper as she had run out of space. This drawing started with the big playground area beyond the fence, a person and naturally included the muddy puddle. Tellingly, this last item was the one element of the picture that was not coloured pink, but filled carefully with brown - it really had made a great impression

on her senses. On the whole, Child X's tour and map gave a strong sense that her needs and interests were being catered for, she had plenty of attention and support from the adults around her, both emotional and practical in terms of helping her to realise her projects

Child X, along with Child U were the only two children in English settings that made efforts to write their names. As can be seen from these maps, though there are recognisable letter-shapes, neither attempt produces a full, legible name, unlike many of the Catalan children. It may be inferred that this is due to the sheer amount of time that is dedicated to teaching this skill to the Catalan children. So, bearing in mind Gardner's (2006) assertion that it is important to provide children with the basic skills to underpin their creative expression, are the English children being disadvantaged in any way? Child X certainly enjoyed writing in her own way, she offered to demonstrate her writing at a bench outside, and prior to the tour she showed me a 'list' that she had made up as part of her play. It may not have been legible writing, but within the marks were letter-shapes that she had picked up on and seemed inclined to develop further.

Research into how children learn to read and write would appear to agree that formal exercises may not be the best way to develop these skills. Whitehead (2007) stated that young children are most likely to investigate print and learn about it through exposure to genuine text. That is they are given the opportunity to find text in their environment and explore its meanings, through items such as logos, greeting cards or leaflets. If the children are then in a situation that supports play, Whitehead (2007) suggested that they have the opportunity to enact the role of readers and writers of this text as they explore it and the play itself has intrinsic demands and motivations that increase the significance of the activity. Finally, Whitehead (2007) outlines the need for children to apply their own scientific approach to the process, to hypothesize and to experiment. Where the teaching process is too formalised, children miss out on these elements, reducing pleasure in the experience and the understanding of text as a means of communication. Superficially, the Catalan children might be good at letter shapes, but that does not necessarily make them good writers or allow them to use those skills creatively.

	Evidence during the tour?	Evidence about practice?
<b>Posing Questions</b>	Yes	Yes
<b>Play</b>	Yes	Yes
<b>Immersion in a Loving Environment</b>	Yes	Yes
<b>Innovation</b>	Yes	Yes
<b>Being Imaginative</b>	Yes	No
<b>Self-determination and Risk-taking</b>	Yes	Yes

Table 14 - Evidence of the core features from Child X.

#### Child Y - Setting B.



Figure 19 - Child Y's Map.

The girl who drew this map was from a Polish family who had lived in the area for a couple of years. Though English was not her first language, she had a reasonable facility with it. She was intrigued by the voice recorder, and periodically she would lean into it throughout the tour and say 'hello'. The tour began indoors, with Child Y showing me the furniture that they had, though often declining to mention the resources on them, often because she was unsure of the names of the items. She identified the computer as her favourite item inside the setting and demonstrated how to play the game that was currently on the screen before closing it and picking another game to play. This impressed another child who walked past as she did not know how to change games. She was very engaged in these games, focusing carefully on them and responding to the action with gasps. However, there was only one computer in the setting and other children were expressing an interest in playing, so it was easy to convince her to resume the tour. Child Y also spent some time playing with the model trains, driving them and

making the required noises or pretending to be the driver or fixing a broken wheel. She began to use blocks to build around the tracks. In this area she introduced me to a friend playing there, who was a boy also from a Polish family, though she tended to ignore most of the other children around the setting in spite of their best efforts to join in the tour.

Other areas around the setting attracted a lesser degree of attention: she merely pointed out the varying contents of boxes and drawers. Finding some animals prompted her to pretend to be a horse for a short while, though after a while she resumed her usual play persona which was that of a puppy. Her practitioners commented that she liked to pretend to be either a horse or a puppy for most of her days. Child Y continued to inhabit this persona until she was asked a question about something she had enjoyed: the setting had received a visit from the vets the previous day, who had brought some puppies with them. This caused Child Y to reflect that she also liked cats and relate how she had been to see some horses recently. A corner of the setting had been set out as a vet's surgery and Child Y spent some time in this area. She began to play at being a horse again and another child pretended to be the vet. However, as the vet tried to treat Child Y in horse mode, she feigned distress and galloped off. She continued in this role for a good 15 minutes, pretending to eat grass, jumping to 'get apples' off imaginary trees, whinnying and diving under my legs as other children came to join her in her role playing. She was then offered the chance to demonstrate the outdoor area, which she agreed to enthusiastically: 'outside!' . It took a while to actually get outside as it was necessary to wait for a member of staff who needed to take a proportion of the children with her; getting those children ready took some time.

Once outside, Child Y went straight to the sandpit where she began to bury the toys, as she had been doing earlier in the day. As she worked, she noted that another child was crying inside and wanted to know why. She began to fill a funnel with the rather wet sand and was surprised by the fact that it would not run through it then followed my advice about poking it through. Having carried out this action to her satisfaction, she turned her attention to scraping up sand, whilst noting that one of the younger children had called a practitioner 'mummy' as opposed to her name. As she moved on, she picked up a toy tractor and made an engine sound, but she was searching for toy animals. She said 'I'm going to build a stable. Will you help me?' and located a toy horse and some Duplo bricks that she used to build a frame around him. She paused for a moment and noted 'he's going to get cold' and so began to attempt a roof over the horse. A practitioner stopped to observe her work and remarked that they had asked the parents of another child if Child Y could go and visit their horses. She



continued to work on this carefully, occasionally remarking upon other children and their actions, though focused upon the task of keeping the horse warm and retrieving additional bricks in order to meet this objective. The stable evolved to contain some babies and some grass for the horse to eat, then Child Y began to gather other small toys to play with her model, such as a police car and a tractor and were accompanied with sound effects.

Child Y was so engrossed in her play with the small world that she had created that it was decided to draw the map later on when she had finished. She began by choosing green and using horizontal strokes to make 'grass'. She appeared to enjoy the process, singing snatches of songs and making a range of noises. She continued with another shade of green, and then another, all representing grass, then added some brown which she seemed to associate with movement. She identified the next two colours, yellow and orange, by name though did not connect them to anything in the setting. As she drew, she pointed out how the dust from the chalk she had used stained her fingers and gone on the floor, which had gone into the bathroom, and the enormous butterfly model that was hanging from the ceiling. Finally, she made some small marks which she said were letters, indicating the letters that spelled out 'Art Area' near where we were sitting. Child Y indicated that she had finished her map by leaning into the voice recorder and saying 'goodbye'.

Throughout the tour, it was obvious that the practitioners both knew about Child Y's fascination with animals, particularly horses and cats, but also tried to harness this interest to enrich her experiences. Child Y was also granted the opportunity to play and absorb herself in worlds of her own creation - paracosms - whether in her role as an animal or as drivers of vehicles in worlds she had built. Root-Bernstein (2009) suggests that the creation of these paracosms, known as worldplay, is an indicator of adult giftedness as children must employ focus, persistence and acquire a range of knowledge in order to construct these worlds. Thus by encouraging Child Y's creativity in this way and providing her with additional stimulus, such as models and opportunities to make contact with these animals, the practitioners are enabling her to elaborate her paracosm. This has the effect of not only bringing Child Y joy and pleasure in her play and learning, but is also providing her with the tools she will need to help her succeed in her adult life.

	Evidence during the tour?	Evidence about practice?
<b>Posing Questions</b>	Yes	Yes
<b>Play</b>	Yes	Yes
<b>Immersion in a Loving Environment</b>	Yes	Yes
<b>Innovation</b>	Yes	No
<b>Being Imaginative</b>	Yes	Yes
<b>Self-determination and Risk-taking</b>	Yes	Yes

Table 15 - Evidence of the core features from Child Y.

#### Child Z - Setting B.

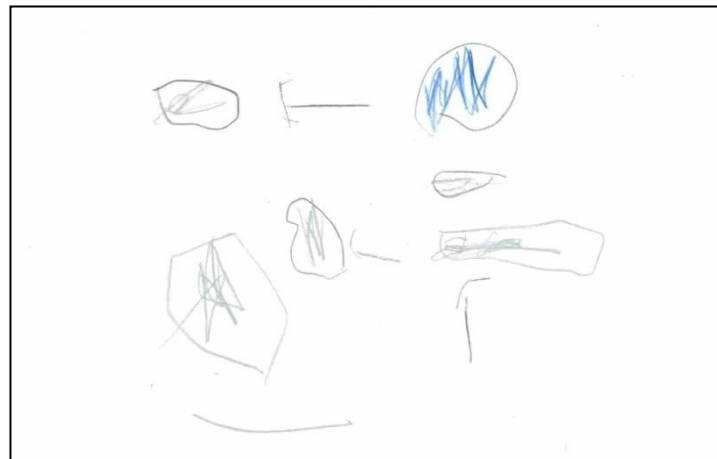


Figure 20 - Child Z's Map.

This last map was the work of a four year old English boy. Though the tour was brief, he took it seriously, even offering to repeat the experience in the afternoon, seeing it almost as his role to show me around. At the beginning of the tour we were joined by another child who wanted to respond to my questions too. I suggested that perhaps they could come back later, but Child Z generously offered them the opportunity to come round with us, though ultimately they did not take him up on this offer. We began the tour inside, starting at his suggestion in the book corner, where he pointed out a dinosaur book. He then led the way to the construction area, which he identified as his favourite area and said 'I build a big tower ... I put cars on it', which was apparently so big that 'I could go on their shoulders (of the grown-ups)'. He then went to the vet's area, where he joked that 'nothing' happened, before explaining that you could dress up.

At this point, Child Z decided that he wanted to go outside, agreeing to show me that area too. As with Child X, Child Z went straight to the mud, which one of the practitioners remarked was his favourite place. He immediately put a cone into the muddy water and began to swirl it about, showing me how the colour had changed. As he played here he pointed out 'the big area' on the other side of the fence, which he stated that he preferred because 'you've got more place to run. 'Cos this is a tiny area and that's a big area.' Still engrossed in his puddle, he then pointed out 'the big school' until his attention was caught by the arrival of some of his classmates, who he introduced me to. He then showed me the array of crates that could be used for building, demonstrated a scooter and climbed on some blocks, answering my questions about the varying resources around the outdoor area.

A practitioner was getting some pipes out of a storage cupboard and she asked him to explain where they had come from: they were a gift from his father. Child X's attention was once again caught by his classmates, one of whom was energetically sweeping muddy water. He wanted to have a turn at this, but there was only one broom so he picked up a stick. He went back towards the puddle and tried to flick the water out saying that he was 'emptying it'. He realised that he required wellingtons for this kind of work so went to change his shoes and affirmed that the mud was his favourite thing in nursery. It was apparently better than the mud he had at home because that mud was 'not as wet'. As with Child Y, he was utterly engrossed in his play, so the map-making had to wait. Later on, he came back inside and did this; it was a short process, but he had very clear ideas about what should go into it. He began by drawing some clear shapes on the page that he stated were the blocks, and then added an arrow, a book, 'the outside' and another arrow. On being reminded that he had a favourite thing to draw he said 'The mud! Now where's some black?' and proceeded to colour in the shapes with this colour. He then added the scooter and the inside of a pipe before declaring it finished.

The activity that Child Z was engaged in with the puddle - prolonged experimentation with a natural resource - is a type of play that has been strongly advocated by early childhood theorists from Froebel, Pestalozzi, Steiner and Montessori through to the Forest Schools that migrated from Scandinavia to the UK (Knight, 2009). These theorists recognised within this type of play the deployment of certain types of strategies that would deepen and extend children's learning such as the repetition and refinement of actions, sensory exploration and the opportunity to take risks (Knight, 2009). It is the contention of today's forest schools advocates such as Knight (2009) that such play is highly conducive to creativity, which will then

be fed back into other areas of the child's life. A muddy hole may not be the same as a forest school, but practitioners such as Knight (2009) recognise the impossibility of providing all children with access to such places at present. She says that it is far more important to encourage the ethos of forest schools into regular settings (Knight, 2009), something which Setting B endeavours to do by encouraging their play with the environment in this way and providing them with the equipment such as wellingtons and all-in-one-suits that will allow them to do so safely and warmly whilst protecting them from any negative feedback that ruined clothes and shoes might provoke. Setting B may not offer the same level of indoor/outdoor flow as Setting A, which lasts for the majority of the day, but they do provide it for extended periods of time, allowing the children to pursue their interests and stimulate their creativity at a relaxed pace.

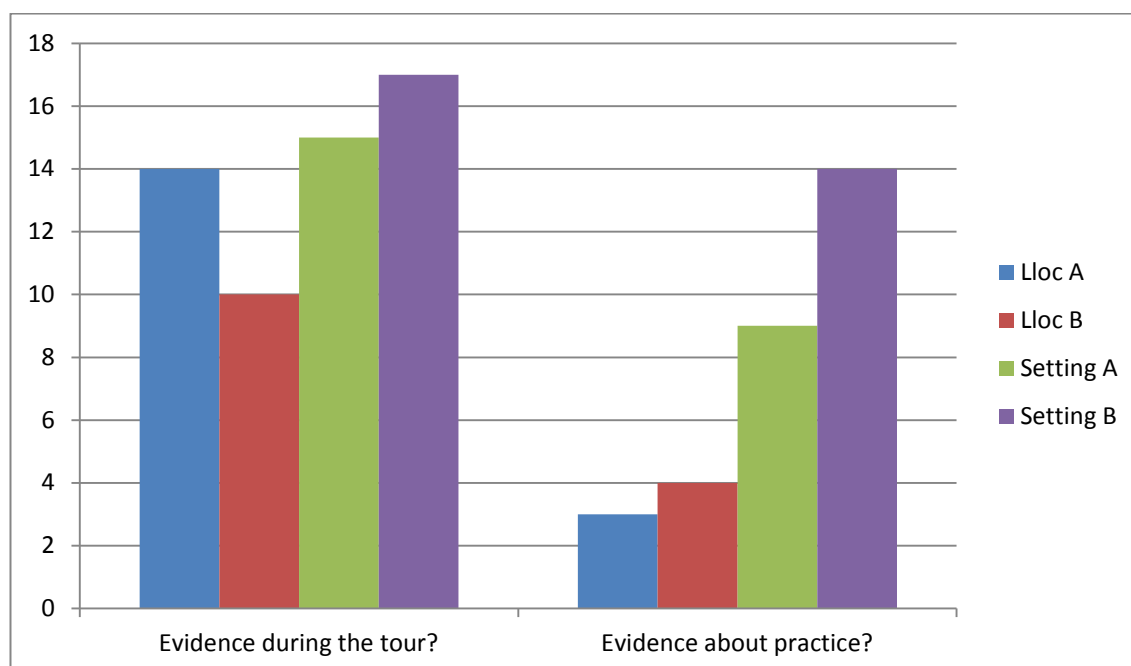
	<b>Evidence during the tour?</b>	<b>Evidence about practice?</b>
<b>Posing Questions</b>	Yes	No
<b>Play</b>	Yes	Yes
<b>Immersion in a Loving Environment</b>	Yes	Yes
<b>Innovation</b>	Yes	Yes
<b>Being Imaginative</b>	No	No
<b>Self-determination and Risk-taking</b>	Yes	Yes

**Table 16 - Evidence of the core features from Child Z.**

### **Summation.**

One salient point to be observed from the data in this section is the difficulty in trying to identify Cremin et al.'s (2006 in Craft, 2008) core features of learners' and teachers' engagement from data that only features one half of that relationship. That being said, the information that was gathered did appear to reflect the data from the previous section: it was almost impossible to find indications about the features in overall practice in the Catalan settings, whereas some information about practice in general could be extracted from the data collection in the English ones. The chart below shows the combined information from the summary tables from each setting: on the left are instances of children exhibiting behaviours connected with the core features; on the right, examples of the core features in the practice of the adults in the setting. There were generally fewer examples of practice than there were of

children's behaviour, but significantly less evidence about practice was found in the Catalan settings.



**Figure 21 - Total instances of the core features during tours and map-making activities with children.**

This may be partly down to staffing: the English staff teams are significantly larger and tend to be deployed around the setting, meaning that a tour would have a greater likelihood of sharing the same space as the adults but also having more of their attention owing to the lower ratios. The staff in English settings were then more likely to be able to interact with questions, support and other elements from the features. This state was also promoted by the approach to practice: the English approach of free-flow play means that a wider range of areas are staffed, whereas in Catalonia the tours were more likely to show one area in use and the rest empty.

*What are the two national cultural perspectives regarding creativity in education?*

This section accesses little information about national approaches, it only records the perspectives of a sample of children in each country.

*What are the prevailing policy approaches to early years education and creativity in each country?*

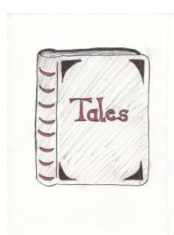
Again, this section does not focus on policy; it focuses on the children themselves. However, it may be deduced from the similarities between the two Catalan settings and the two English settings that English policy encourages a more child-centred, exploratory approach than the more formal Catalan one.

*How do these cultural and policy approaches translate to impact on the fostering of creativity in the early years setting?*

The data in this section revealed three themes that appeared to have an impact upon children and, by extension, their creative expression: location, choice of activity and schematic behaviour. These elements are also recognised by theorists such as Knight (2009) and Duffy (2006) as being key to the creative process. Cultural and policy approaches in England appeared better able to facilitate the children in exercising these choices and behaviours, whereas in Catalonia children with a deep connection to the outdoors were only able to play there for short periods and choice and the execution of schematic exploration were limited.

*What degrees of difference are there in the actual fostering of creativity in early years settings between the two countries?*

Interestingly, there was a correlation between the degree to which children were able to control those elements outlined above and how much indication of Cremin et al.'s (2006 in Craft, 2008) core features of learners' and teachers' engagement there was in the setting as a whole. As highlighted earlier, there was almost no indication of some of these features in the Catalan settings. What is clear from these observations, however, is that lack of opportunity may not mean the extinction of creativity in children. There appears to be a natural proclivity towards it, meaning that given the opportunity on the tours, many of the children exhibited questioning, innovative and imaginative behaviours. This would appear to reflect the contention of theorists such as Robinson (2001) that creativity is an innate human trait as it continued to surface no matter the conditions, though to different degrees.



### **And they all lived...?**

This study has now reached the end of its tale. This chapter of the thesis has drawn out the varying elements of the national narratives pertaining to the cultivation of creativity in the early years, how those current systems have come about, what the values are that inform them, what current policy looks like and how it informs practice, right down to what is actually going on in early years settings and how children and practitioners feel about these processes. In carrying out these methods, it was certainly apparent that some methods were easier to carry out than others. The documentary analysis of the texts that formed the basis of the work

on the wider systems was the most straightforward, and owing to the volume of perspectives that could be accessed, generally more balanced. The one exception to this was the reconstruction of the Catalan chronosystem: there were limited documents available in this area, which risks that particular part of the narrative being coloured by the voices of one or two writers. The methods within the settings were the most difficult both to carry out and to analyse: they required a great deal of time at all stages of the process, and beyond the issues of coming from a small sample, the data have to pass through the filter of my own narrative, both at the point of recording, but also at the point of analysis.

Robson (1993) highlights these difficulties in the observation process as almost par for the course, something that the observer should be aware of. I think perhaps I was unprepared for how much of a hindrance the self can be, particularly when working with children owing to the need to tune in to their voices. Sometimes on the recordings I could hear myself repeating questions over and over, thinking that I had not got an answer. Listening back later I was able to understand that the answer had simply not been expressed in a format that I might expect - silence can speak volumes. Individuality and interpretation were continual features from the documentary stages to the work with children, but they should not be characterised as solely problematic. Rather, as Barthes (1988) contends, everything in a narrative has significance and as Froebel (1886) argued for the understanding of both the particular and the general in unpicking the education process, these differences are useful truths rather than hindrances. In spite of these issues, the methods certainly clarified that there are some striking differences in how the two countries educate and promote the creativity of children aged between three and four, finding that these differences run deeper than policy alone.

This chapter has highlighted some key points about the cultivation of creativity in early years education. Firstly, the research entirely supports Dewey's (1897) contention about the intimate connection between a society and its education system: history shows how the patchwork provision in England appears to be a result of traditionally more laissez-faire approaches by the state leading to industry, church and parents trying to fill the gap (Gillard, 2011), while its middle-ground politics (Douglas, 2005) have precluded too many dramatic policy changes taking place and allowed the country to focus its education on the demands of the economy. The more standardised provision of Catalonia, however, reflects its repeated quests to rebuild and strengthen itself as a nation following dramatic changes in its society as well as a concern for identity (González Agapito, 1991). It has been possible to see within these narratives the impacts of changing politics, international events and different values and

perspectives on what early years education is for; and how these issues have affected how creativity is cultivated at this end of the education system.

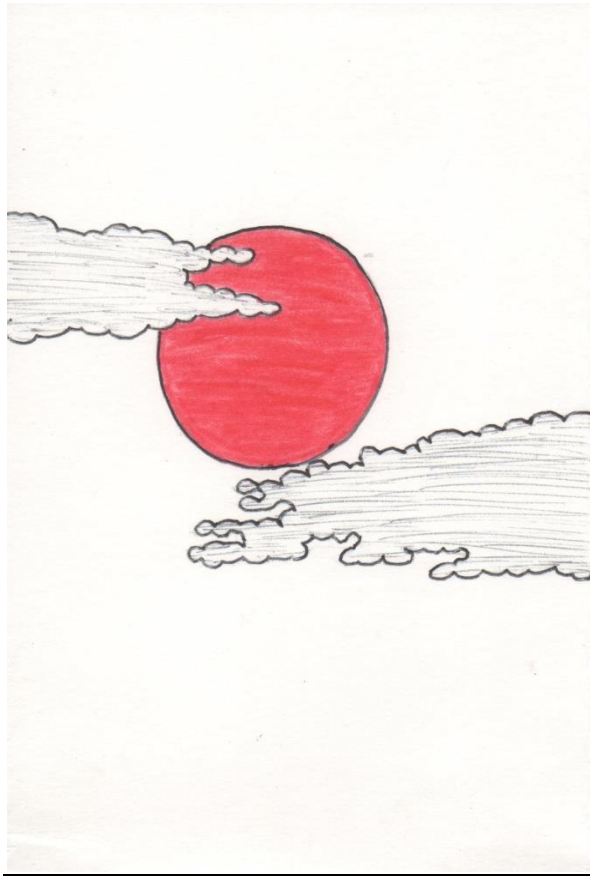
The two national systems under study appear to have taken on similar formative pedagogical influences (e.g. Froebel.org, no date; Sureda, 2010), many of these known to champion the creative development of children. These influences, however, have been shaped by those societal factors referred to in the previous paragraph, leading to differences in the extent to which they have been followed. Currently, both countries appear to be conflicted about the role of creativity in early years education, perhaps owing to uncertainties about what that stage of education should be for. There is evidence in the curriculums of both countries that while they respect the particular needs and characteristics of that age and the value of play, both do also view this period as a preparatory stage for more formal schooling (DfE, 2012a; Departament d'Educació, 2008). If this schooling is, as Dewey (1897) would argue, geared towards the desired social outcomes of the country, then the degree to which creativity is fostered may depend upon how well it is perceived to serve those demands. Problematically, perceptions about creativity are far from clear in either country, as can be seen from the interviews with practitioners, which may be contributing to a lack of support for it. That being said, English policy today explicitly recognises the role of creativity in effective teaching and learning (DfE, 2012a).

In the settings themselves, while there were small differences between the two settings within each country, it does appear that the English ones were more effective in cultivating creativity when measured against the core features of learner's and teacher's engagement developed by Cremin et al. (2006 in Craft, 2008). There appeared to be two main reasons for this. Firstly, practitioner interviews from both countries suggested that curriculum demands were felt to hinder rather than help settings foster creativity in young children: however, the English practitioners felt more able to get the curriculum to work for them. This may partly be connected to the second reason, which was staff / child ratios: the Catalan practitioners expressed a desire to be more creative with the curriculum, but felt it to be very difficult with so many children in their care. This is not to say that the children in those Catalan settings were unable to be creative. This study strongly supports the contention of those like Robinson (2001) who believe creativity to be an eminently natural aspect of being human: given the slightest opportunity, children would seize the chance to be creative, explore the affordances of their environment and think about things in a different way.



So ends this chapter's deconstruction of the narratives regarding creativity and early years education in England and Catalonia. The following and final chapter of this thesis will try to explore the issues raised by the methods used in this chapter and discuss their implications for both this study and for future research, hopefully providing a fitting denouement to the process.

## Chapter 5 - Conclusion.



When considering the fostering of creativity in young children as part of a narrative that stretches beyond the classroom and even beyond the curriculum, it becomes clear that there are a multitude of influences that impinge upon this process. This study has endeavoured to identify these influences and assess the scale of their impact upon cultivating creativity. The preparation for this project identified a powerful discourse championing the cultivation of creativity for the economic benefit of nations and societies, though the work of educationalists and psychologists also remarked upon the merits of promoting creative expression for the general health, well-being and positive development of the individual. Creativity as a concept was shown to be difficult to identify, owing to the degree of subjectivity involved in this process, and strongly influenced by the social values and beliefs of the culture around it. This thesis will now draw the thread of the stories together, exploring whether the original research questions have been answered and trying to establish some conclusions about the data that have been explored in the process.

...

Before this chapter turns to the original research questions, a brief summary of the context of early years education in each country will be provided. This type of education is one which has traditionally received less state focus in both countries, but became an increasing necessity as each society turned more urban and industrialised (Baldock, Fitzgerald & Kay, 2005; Colmenar Orzaes, 2010). Currently, early years education enjoys near total take-up in both countries (Department for Education/HM Treasury, 2014; Ministerio de Educación, Cultura y Deporte, 2013) and though the sectors may have traditionally focused on care and life skills (Baldock, Fitzgerald & Kay, 2005; Ruiz Berrio, 2010), today they feature strongly pedagogic approaches (DfE, 2012a; Departament d'Educació, 2008), perhaps indicating a shift towards viewing children as more 'beings' than 'becomings' (see Qvortrup, 1994). This phenomenon has been observed as ascending since the beginning of the 20th Century, in line with developments in psychology and the welfare state (Hendrick, 1997). That being said, right now both curriculums emphasise the importance of preparation for school in this stage (DfE, 2012a; Departament d'Educació, 2008), which in England certainly marks a change from the preceding version.

These educational approaches have both been influenced by similar pedagogical theories, including those of Froebel and Montessori (Sureda, 2010; Colmenar Orzaes, 2010; Gillard, 2011), and though the nations in which they are situated have undergone some similar events (industrialisation, war, economic crisis) that have impacted upon them, two distinct approaches have emerged. England with its stable, middle-ground politics (Douglas, 2005) has built a system with one eye on its economy (e.g. Truss, 2014), whereas the dramatic instability throughout Catalonia's history has meant that its approach to early years education has evolved to meet the demands of building and rebuilding nation (Bartolomé Martínez, 1992; Britt Arredondo, 2005). Beyond the driving forces behind the respective approaches to early years education, history has also affected the type of provision available in each country. Catalonia generally has very similar nursery classes within schools, perhaps reflecting that need to build a united nation (González Agapito, 1991), whereas England's 'patchwork' provision is a legacy of a traditionally neglected sector that evolved from the contributions of church, industry, charity and parents (Gillard, 2011). It must therefore be considered that the national narratives around early years education and creativity that the research questions have explored have their genesis in these essential attributes.

#### *What are the two national cultural perspectives regarding creativity in education?*

This question takes as its starting point the view of the literature that values and beliefs about this area may well vary from culture to culture (e.g. Gardner, 2006). Taking a historical

approach, it became clear that creative expression had been a recurring feature in approaches to early years education in both countries throughout the centuries of their existence; in part reflecting the cultural cross-fertilization of renowned theorists such as Owen and Froebel in the formation of both systems (Gillard, 2011; Sureda, 2010; Colmenar Orzaes, 2010). The extent to which creativity was cultivated was strongly connected to ideology around the purposes of such education and value of creativity at the time, reflecting Csikszentmihalyi's (1999) view of creativity as a socio-cultural phenomenon.

Currently, creativity is cited in national discourses in both countries as valuable (e.g. Brown, 2004; Mas, 2007) and its merits are also much discussed in educational research (e.g. Ribé, 1997; Craft, 2007). That being said, it was the contention of practitioners in both countries that creativity is not as well-valued as it should be, neither by parents nor by the country as a whole. Though at a macro-level, both countries valued creativity for its perceived benefits to their economies (H M Government, 2013a; Gobierno de España, 2013), this thread was stronger in the English evidence; whereas in Catalonia nation and national identity were paramount, causing struggles between tradition and innovation as they sought to build and understand their character (González Agapito, 1991). At present, aside from academic and explicitly educational works, there seemed to be little textual material that focused on the importance of creativity to children as individuals. Yet in spite of the themes in the documents, the voices of the practitioners in both countries focused more on the individual than economy or nation.

The literature review also included some material that suggested that there might be perceptions about identity, particularly gender and Special Educational Needs (e.g. Moran, 2011; Bruce, 2011), that might preclude members of those groups from receiving full opportunities to express themselves creatively. This was not supported by current perspectives from the documentation, in fact both countries' curriculums are very strong on equality (Departament d'Educació, 2008; DfE, 2012a), nor was it revealed in the settings themselves, not that this was a particular focus of the observations of this project. It should also be highlighted that the circumstances within these few settings cannot claim to represent more general discourse.

The Catalan and English documents reveal pride in their respective creative drives and patrimonies (e.g. Brown, 2004; Mas, 2007), though interestingly there seemed to be a difference in perspective as to how creativity arises. The English perspective acknowledges the importance of exposure to new and different experiences in the process (Creative

Partnerships, no date; Brown, 2004), whereas the Catalan view finds creativity to be much more innate and affiliated with identity (Pujols, 2012; Mas, 2007). Again, these views were not necessarily shared by all practitioners: views on what creativity is and how it is fostered varied from individual to individual. It would appear that the search for a national perspective in itself can be problematic as it would appear to differ depending upon where it has originated from. Are national approaches written by the citizens or by a handful at the top? That being the case, it was necessary to consider which ones have the most impact upon what actually happens.

*What are the prevailing policy approaches to early years education and creativity in each country?*

This thesis has acknowledged from the beginning the connection between education and the society in which it is taking place (Dewey, 1897; Bronfenbrenner, 1979), therefore it might be assumed that there should be a connection between the findings outlined above and current policy approaches. In keeping with the shared influences, there are certain aspects of the curriculums which do appear to mesh together, indeed both curriculums compare well to the core features of learners' and teachers' engagement (Cremin et al., 2006 in Craft, 2008), even though only the English curriculum mentions creativity explicitly (DfE, 2012a). There are slight differences in how the two curriculums appear to support the core features, however.

Regarding *Immersion in a loving environment*, the Catalan curriculum specifically mentions the importance of love in terms of the relationship between staff and children (Departament d'Educació, 2008), which is something that the English document shies away from, preferring the drier term 'positive relationships' (DfE, 2012a). In terms of *Play*, both documents acknowledge its key role in learning, but the English curriculum firmly highlights it as the most effective method of learning (DfE, 2012a) whereas its Catalan counterpart suggests that it is *one aspect* of learning, which includes work (Departament d'Educació, 2008). Though each document has strengths and weaknesses, they do appear to be similarly propitious towards the fostering of creativity in the classroom.

Further aspects of the curriculums beyond practice guidance for the day-to-day classroom can also be viewed as affecting how well creativity is fostered. Both documents outline the importance of working with parents (DfE, 2012a; Departament d'Educació, 2008), which is recognised by, amongst others, Sylva et al. (2004) and Bowlby (2005) as key to understanding children and promoting their emotional well-being: a factor which must be established before children may then go on to realise higher-order skills such as creativity (see Maslow, 1968). The English curriculum does appear to be better equipped to promote this intention as it

provides rather more guidance as to how this should actually take place (DfE, 2012a). On the other hand, the Catalan curriculum appears to have a more creativity-friendly approach to assessment. For Robinson (2001), measuring progress on a linear scale means a 'septic focus' that is detrimental to individual development and creativity while Nutbrown (2006) argued that 'respectful', child-centred assessment can benefit the individual.

Looking at the assessment requirements of both curriculums, it would appear that the Catalan version is much nearer the 'respectful' model as it requires simple reportage of where the child is in regard to their learning (Departament d'Educació, 2008). The English version is much more criterion-based (DfE, 2012a), which may mean that it is neither good at recording children's individual creativity nor promoting it as children could be pushed to focus on more quantifiable skills. Though working with parents and assessment are not explicitly linked to creativity in either of the two curriculums, the theory espoused by psychologists such as Bowlby (2005) and Maslow (1968) appears to demonstrate that each document has certain strengths and weaknesses in supporting particular social and emotional aspects of a child's development. These factors will affect the degree to which creativity is fostered, though how effective the documents might be in this respect cannot be judged on this evidence alone.

It has been argued that effective rendering of curriculum requirements requires well-qualified staff, a point long made by educationalists such as Carr (1980). Current requirements in England show that there is no requirement yet for graduate staff to lead practice in non-maintained settings (DfE, 2012a), which make up the majority of English provision (Brind et al., 2012). This is in stark contrast to Catalonia, where all nursery classes are required to be led by qualified teachers (Departament d'Educació, 2008). Thus, bearing in mind Carr (1980) and the findings of the EPPE project (Sylva et al., 2004), it might be expected that Catalan settings would be more effective at delivering their curriculums and thus in fostering creativity, owing to its apparently favourable content. Yet counter to this run economic influences on policy: cuts to budgets in both countries since the financial crash have affected provision considerably. Changes in tax credits in England have impacted on affordability of nursery care and consequently the ability of many settings to employ well-qualified staff (NDNA, 2013), worsening an already poor situation. In Catalonia, there has been a policy of actively cutting staff to children ratios from central government (La Moncloa, 2012), so though the staff may be well-qualified, they may be responsible for up to 3 times as many children as an English Level 3 practitioner (Jefatura del Estado, 2006; DfE, 2012a), potentially negating the effect of further training, particularly when cultivating creativity in young children appears to require

high levels of adult interaction, as evidenced by Cremin et al.'s core features (2006 in Craft, 2008).

The value of creativity in education to each country may be read in their policies. The last Labour government in this country certainly invested hugely in creativity (Craft, 2006), but funding for many initiatives was withdrawn (e.g. Creative Partnerships, 2012), perhaps indicating a change in priorities - and there have been no such provisions in Catalonia. The dichotomy between documented perspectives on the value of creativity and an alleged undervaluing of the concept in education is apparent in the curriculums of both countries as on the one hand, both advocate play and exploratory learning, whereas on the other there is an emphasis on specific skills and readiness for school (DfE, 2012a; Departament d'Educació, 2008). In England, there has been a shift from a curriculum that had Creative Development as an Area of Learning and Development in its own right (DfES, 2008) to one that appears to separate learning and development by domain, including 'expressive arts and design' (DfE, 2012a). Yet though there has been a movement in ideology, the current curriculum still acknowledges creativity as being essential to effective teaching and learning (DfE, 2012a). The Catalan curriculum, however, never mentions the term 'creativity'; it only highlights the importance of artistic expressions, particularly as part of the development of language and communication. Thus though the Catalan curriculum content appears to match well with Cremin et al.'s (2006 in Craft, 2008) features, the fostering of creativity does not appear to be a motivation anywhere in its design.

Considering that the data supplied for the first research question indicate that both countries do value creativity for its benefits to the nation and economy, why is the Catalan curriculum not explicit about its importance? This may in part be connected to those views espoused in Catalan documents of creativity as being a largely innate and particularly Catalan quality (Pujols, 2012; Mas, 2007): perhaps it is not viewed as needing cultivation and therefore not a purpose of education in the same way as learning to read or write. There may also be an effect of the conflict between tradition and modernity in the construction of Catalan identity (González Agapito, 1991): England's history has made it more secure, able to build on its legacy and focus on innovating for the future, whereas Catalonia is continuing to find its place in the world, struggling in many ways with 'too much history' (Eaude, 2007). Catalonia's most original thinkers have always looked back at their history as well as forward, Gaudí being one such example (Eaude, 2007). It is interesting to note the focus on being Catalan that is as important as the creation of something new. As to whether these approaches truly reflect the views of

the population as a whole, that is difficult to ascertain from this information as policy is generally written by the few for the many, though it may be seen from the views of the practitioners interviewed in both countries that they felt the policy to be deficient in terms of fostering creativity.

*How do these cultural and policy approaches translate to impact on the fostering of creativity in the early years setting?*

Perhaps the most interesting aspect of this study has been the recognition that the existence of a curriculum is a relatively small element of this story: both the Catalan and the English curriculums appear to have broadly similar aims and, as highlighted above, were informed by the same precepts of early years educational practice, yet their implementation in the classroom could not be more different. The Catalan curriculum, for example, highlights the desirability of promoting creativity as part of developing children's communicative abilities and recognises the importance of exploratory play activities (Departament d'Educació, 2008). Yet the reality of the two settings visited during the course of this project revealed very formal, adult-led teaching practices actually taking place, which was surprising given the content of the curriculum. The practitioners themselves attributed this state of affairs to a focus on the more formal aspects of the curriculum, whether societal or by the school in which they were based, and a lack of staff to give children the time and range of activities they would like. This last point was a particular issue for Lloc B, whose lead practitioner was frequently leading classes alone. The fact that she frequently had to stretch her attentions and deal with minor crises that took her away from the whole class affected the frequency of which Cremin et al.'s (2006 in Craft, 2008) core features of learners' and teachers' engagement could be measured: she simply could not consistently be part of that engagement.

As indicated earlier, the English curriculum also highlights the importance of child-led and exploratory learning and also explicitly highlights creativity as being an essential part of quality teaching and learning (DfE, 2012a). Yet in spite of this, practitioners in the English settings felt that it was not wholly conducive to creativity and also identified some social, particularly parental, resistance to cultivating this trait as part of early years education. These misgivings seem unfounded when comparing practice as the English settings were shown to fare much better in fostering creativity both specifically and through their general practice, which revealed higher levels of the core features (Cremin et al. 2006 in Craft, 2008) than the Catalan settings. There was, however, a slight difference in the effectiveness of the two English settings, with Setting A performing consistently better. This might in part be a reflection of



how well practitioners understood the concept of creativity - the two lead practitioners had varied understandings of the subject - which may be inhibiting practice from being as effective as it could be.

It is interesting to note here a corresponding difference in types of qualification between these two settings, particularly in light of continued changes around what a well-qualified early years professional should look like (e.g. DfE, 2013b) and the effects of economic policy (NDNA, 2013). Setting B's lead practitioners were qualified to degree level, with one holding EYPS, whereas both the lead practitioners in Setting A were qualified teachers. However, it would require looking at more than two settings to establish whether QTS is any greater mark of quality training than EYPS or EYTS and the extent to which fiscal policy impacts upon fostering creativity in the early years. The data gathered from working with the individual children highlighted three important factors for the children that were also recognised by theorists (e.g. Knight, 2009; Duffy, 2006): location, choice of activity and schematic behaviour. The evidence from within the four settings showed that English children were able to exercise these choices and behaviours almost continually, whereas the Catalan children, despite the suggestions of the curriculum, had little choice over their location or what they did.

So why are there differences in how well a policy is adhered to? There seems to be a contradiction here between received wisdom and reality. This thesis has drawn upon several views that well-qualified staff should signify good outcomes and the application of theory to practice (e.g. DfE, 2012; Carr, 1980). This leads to two possibilities: either training for professionals in Catalonia is inadequate (something that was hinted at by Profesora A Lloc B in her wish for training in how to foster creativity), or there are other factors at play. This thesis has not investigated into the syllabi by which early years education professionals are trained in each country, therefore it has nothing to base any judgements upon in this area; however, the continual lesson that this piece of research shows is that there is never just one cause. In terms of the idea of national narratives that have been referred to throughout this chapter, it is possible that popular discourses about what school should be (perhaps sitting and learning) have over-powered the actual curriculum content - the *Capacitats*.

This was highlighted by Profesora A from Lloc A who felt that there was a focus on the so-called 'Maria' subjects, though it is not precisely clear where she felt this focus came from. The comments made by Profesora B - Lloc A about reality and fiction were interesting here: either there are fictions about the curriculum, or the document itself is perhaps viewed as a fiction. There is also the greater degree of autonomy that is built into the Catalan system: the English

EYFS is a 'statutory framework' (DfE, 2012a), whereas its counterpart, in spite of providing far greater detail, champions the autonomy of pedagogy for each setting (Departament d'Educació, 2008). The effect of staffing should not be under-estimated either: the point was raised by the Catalan practitioners that having to consider how they could manage a large group whilst initiating more creative activities had a serious impact upon carrying them out. As with much of the narratives unfolded by this project, cause and effect is too simple a mechanism to explain the complexities of these stories: each phenomenon is part of an inter-dependent system of other phenomena.

It was noted in the previous section that the curriculums both recognised the importance of working in partnership with parents and assessment as part of effective practice, though each had different approaches. In contrast to the classroom practice discussed above, these translated fairly predictably to practice. The English settings were consistent in their attempts to work with parents: indeed, Setting B was set up by parents, as many have been throughout the history of English early years settings (Playgroup Movement, 2013). The Catalan settings, on the other hand, appeared to confine their work with parents to a yearly visit by the parents to the class and end-of-term meetings and reports. As highlighted by theorists from Bowlby (2005) to Bruce (2011) there is a strong connection between the child's socio-emotional state and their ability to perform well in higher-order tasks that can only be understood and boosted by forging these strong connections with family. Evidence about assessment was not really gathered by the methods, though practitioners from both countries hinted at external pressures to teach certain things, thus constraining their ability to promote creativity more effectively. However, this is flimsy evidence upon which to draw any conclusions about how policy regarding assessment has impacted upon the fostering of creativity in early years settings.

With respect to the more problematic cultural perspectives around creativity identified by the literature, the actual situation did not always appear to reflect these. Investigating the gendering of creative activities, as highlighted by de Beauvoir (1949) amongst others, was not a primary aim of this investigation, however, there appeared to be a strong degree of parity between the sexes in terms of the types of activities they were both offered and chose to do in the settings that were observed. This could simply be a function of the children being considered too young to be impeded by such divisions, or too young to pay them much heed, but considering the picture optimistically, perhaps both countries are progressing well along the road to gender equality. Regarding the associations of creativity with mental illness or

disorder, it seemed apparent from both documentary and interview material that creativity was considered beneficial for children's wellbeing. However, Profesora A from Lloc B did appear to fear the potential for disorder as she did not feel capable of allowing creative activities in her poorly-supervised class, though it is debatable whether societal perceptions are the real issue here.

These findings perhaps suggest that rather than tweaking curriculum content, greater emphasis needs to be placed on understanding why we have the systems we do as opposed to trying to impose change upon them. If practitioners are uninformed, ill-prepared or under-resourced they are likely to find it hard to carry out the demands of the curriculum. Similarly, where persistent cultural attitudes remain unacknowledged, real change may be difficult to achieve. As Csikszentmihalyi (1999) points out, it is the nature of the culture itself that determines how well it adapts and fosters creativity. It seems that the demand for creative people that has been identified by governments and industry is unlikely to disappear: markets and technologies will continue to grow and change. However, in terms of education, there is a conceivable concern that where pursuit of economic success is at the forefront of policy development, perhaps creativity may be passed over in favour of other, more obvious and quicker fixes such as the promotion of phonics knowledge to secure literacy skills in readiness for school (DfE, 2012a). Yet if we are to employ these curriculums in the process of cultivating creativity, this study suggests the importance of ensuring that practitioners and settings have access to adequate training that can challenge beliefs, set values and provide practical preparation. Beyond this, governments must match their intentions with investment: even the best trained practitioner may find themselves unable to provide the best experiences for the children in their care if they do not have the support and resources to do so.

*What degrees of difference are there in the actual fostering of creativity in early years settings between the two countries?*

Regarding the final question about degrees of difference in the actual fostering of creativity in early years settings in the two countries, the reality was surprising considering the aforementioned similarities in policy intention. That being said, the results of the Global Creativity Index hinted at this outcome as the UK scored more highly than Spain (Florida et al., 2011), though it is not a measure based in early years education but of the countries as a whole. As highlighted in the literature, measuring creativity itself can be a task fraught with problems that different researchers have tackled in a number of ways according to the situation. This study was trying to identify whether an approach to early years education was

conducive to creativity: therefore rather than judging whether it produces creativity, which would be subjective, it looked at whether the conditions for creativity were being provided for the individuals within the systems: were their needs being met? This was because according to many specialists in creativity and early years education, it is only when the conditions are right that creativity can take place (e.g. Cremin et al., 2006 in Craft, 2008; Bruce, 2011). It is true that this project did not intend to find a 'winning' approach by comparing the two systems, it was more interested in illuminating the elements of the creativity narrative, yet the observations of practice did show a marked difference in the presence of those features that were strongly associated with the cultivation of creativity, with the English settings showing more.

Though the GCI is not necessarily a measure of the effectiveness of early years education in fostering creativity, it was interesting to see that the biggest difference between the two countries was that of Talent (Florida et al., 2011), which might suggest that it had been insufficiently nurtured by Spain, of which Catalonia is a part. This study has not focused on attitudes towards creativity and early years education in the rest of the country, which might help to answer this question more clearly, but this discrepancy could appear to connect to that Catalan notion of creativity as more of an innate quality (Pujols, 2012; Mas, 2007) that perhaps does not require nurturing. Yet cultural attitudes were also cited by practitioners in England as being detrimental to the fostering of creativity: they felt that creativity was insufficiently valued by society, including parents, and the curriculum, despite its apparent championing of creativity could be constraining. The difference between the two countries appeared to lie in how confident the practitioners felt in dealing with these problems. In Catalonia, Lloc A performed slightly better than Lloc B; the lead practitioner of Lloc A referenced the same problems as Lloc B, but also evinced a willingness to try to overcome them by ignoring some of the pressures she felt from elsewhere in the system or allowing the whole group to paint. The British settings took this much further, talking about how they got the curriculum to work for them and faced challenges: in England, it was Setting A that was most vocal about this, and Setting A that demonstrated the highest incidences of the core features.

So what is it that gives a practitioner confidence to challenge perceived barriers from policy and society? As has been highlighted repeatedly, staff ratios could be seen to have a large impact: Lloc B had one practitioner who was not at all confident, whereas Setting A had an extensive team. In fact, practitioner confidence in dealing with these pressures exactly followed the size of the teams, perhaps there is strength in numbers. Between the two English

settings, there were differences in qualification that might have contributed to practitioner knowledge and therefore confidence: the same could not be said for the Catalan practitioners, though perhaps in the 8 year gap between the time the two lead practitioners qualified, there may have been some changes to what they had been taught. In terms of cultural attitudes and particularly those of parents, the English practitioners talked about how they challenged these beliefs. The Catalan practitioners did not mention these views as coming from parents particularly, more from society as a whole. It is odd; when considering the fact that the Catalan head teachers affirmed that they are trusted by society to get on with the business of education that, they should feel so much external pressure. Perhaps partnership working has been of benefit to the English practitioners: not only are they able to pinpoint how parents are feeling, but they feel empowered to work with them for change, as opposed to feeling a vague and indefinable lack of respect for creative activities.

These connections, however, are far from conclusive: the study has answered some questions about the differences between creativity in early years education in the two countries under study, but has raised even more. Further study is required to see how much truth there might be in the possibilities raised by the previous paragraph. In terms of the questions raised by this chapter regarding whether there is such a thing as a national voice, it would appear that though there are stated differences between practitioners' opinions and policy, the reality is not quite the same. English practice, despite the cynicism of the practitioners, runs fairly close to the ideals espoused by policy. This would appear to suggest that though there may be some differences in opinion between those in the exosystem and those at the microsystem, their intentions are running along similar lines. One wonders if there might be some sort of link here to the middle-ground politics that are characteristic of England's history (Douglas, 2005): everyone is concerned with roughly the same outcomes. It seems odd, then, that Catalonia, with its valuing of solidarity (Mas, 2007) has such a disparity between the voices in its society. It is odder still that this disparity is not supported by the facts: there appear to be misunderstandings about what is actually in the policy, which would actually mesh very well with the practitioners' own views. It could perhaps be conjectured that these are the scars of history again could decades of internal struggles, compatriots against each other, lead to a habit of mistrust? Once again, there is not sufficient evidence in the stories that this project has turned up, only hints.

What has been interesting about the analysis for this project is the fact that even though there were obvious disparities between the provision in the two countries that the theory and

research would suggest could be detrimental, children's creativity was never completely prevented by practice. The methods with the children and the observations revealed almost an instinctive impulse to try to express themselves in this way that would use the little outlets that it had available, whether that was waiting until sanctioned play times, or seizing little moments in class activities to practise their schematic behaviours or indeed wave a tall grass stem as though it were a flag. That being said, it is clear that the research and theory points to the importance of early opportunity being connected to later creativity: it is contended that an educational system that fails to recognise and nurture children's individual modes of expression and ability risks suffocating those very traits and denying the individual the opportunity to flourish (Gardner, 2006; Robinson, 2009). This suggests that there is a strong moral impetus for practitioners and systems to understand themselves and their limitations in order to actively foster creativity in early years settings.

...

This study has been necessarily limited by its size and by the timescale available to myself as a sole researcher. Though their scope was wider, the areas of research that focused on the wider chrono- , macro- and exosystems were much easier to process as the sources were already in a textual format. In terms of breadth and depth of data, these methods were effective in providing a detailed picture of these areas. It was, however, easier to create a more balanced account of the history of early years education in England than in Catalonia simply because there was a greater range of English texts on that subject area than could be found about Catalonia. The research conducted within the settings required a great deal more time and attention and thus there was a finite amount that could be gathered: where the analysis of the wider systems had access to a wide-range of texts and perspectives, the research on actual practice and the individual perspective was limited to a handful of settings and individuals, which makes generalization from these data about the whole system quite difficult. It is best, perhaps to think of these examples as illustrations from the national narrative rather than representative of the whole. These are also the areas that are perhaps most at risk from being coloured by my personal narrative, whether through bias or observer effects (Robson, 1993). In seeking to tell the stories of others, how can I be sure that I have heard what they wanted to tell me rather than what I wanted to hear? Yet as a snapshot of standard practice and as means of listening to the stories of individuals in the system, the combination of methods used in this project provided details about an adequate and a useful balance to the broader narratives provided by culture, politics and policy.

This study might be viewed as a starting point in beginning to understand national narratives regarding the cultivation of creativity in young children: further research could include visiting many more settings and interviewing more widely. This would entail, in the English settings, interviewing the full staff team instead of just the lead practitioners in order to establish the strength of the link between levels of qualification and understanding of the concept of creativity, and in the Catalan settings, interviewing other members of staff in the school such as the head teacher and the teacher of the next class up in order to explore how the culture of the whole school might be impacting upon the fostering of creativity in three to four year olds. There could also be different questions that would explore the links between culture and practice. It would be interesting to gather the views of parents and look for connections with cultural values, policy aims and the views of the practitioners - the topic of parental views on the value versus inconvenience of creative activities was one referenced by practitioners and cropped up in work with the children. Interviewing older children would help to establish what lasting effects there might have been from their early years experiences. Beyond the norm of standard national practice that this study has been exploring, it would be interesting to seek out settings that may comply with the curriculum but in overtly different ways or those that apply their own curriculum such as Steiner schools. Might a Steiner school in Catalonia differ to one in England? These areas would certainly add greater detail the narrative again, and perhaps strengthen the arguments that this project has made regarding how national approaches impact upon the cultivation of creativity in young children.

While this project can make no grand claims to having resolved how best to foster creativity in young children, it has at least endeavoured to unpick some of the factors that might impact upon this process: history, cultural values, policy and practice. The systems of both countries retain the imprint of these factors, which impact in different ways upon their ability to promote creativity: the ad hoc arrangement of early childhood provision and training in England; the Spanish austerity measures that have resulted less classroom support. By telling the tale of these two systems perhaps a little more light has been shone upon them, revealing the driving forces of each narrative for those who might wish to steer them in a new direction. It has woven together key strands from each area of the ecological system that makes up the cultivation of creativity in early years education in order to produce a more detailed account of the process and its influences beyond the classroom and the curriculum. It has also explored a national early years education system, Catalonia, that has received little attention in English educational research with a view to extending knowledge and using the comparison as a lens to better understand how such systems function. It has extended my own narrative, increasing

my knowledge, which I hope to be able to pass on in my professional capacity. Yet whatever the driver for improving the cultivation of creativity in young children - economic, academic, political, psychological, and personal - this particular story concludes with one key affirmation apparent from both the literature and from the children themselves: creativity is about more than its product, it is about play, fun and beauty too - it is one of the joys of being human.



## Appendix A.

### Application for Ethical Approval for Research Degrees

#### (MA by research, MPHIL/PhD, EdD)

Name of student:

Madeleine Anne Findon

MA

By

research

EdD

PhD

X

Project title: 'To compare the approaches to early years education between England and Catalonia and examine how they impact on the ability of early years settings to foster creativity in children.'

Supervisor:

Mary Briggs & Michael Wyness

#### Methodology

This project will be using documentary analysis of respective policies and curriculums, interviews and/or questionnaires with early years practitioners, observations of practice in early years settings and discussions and activities with children aged 3-4 years. The pilot study will further refine the choice of methods used.

#### Participants

The participants in this study will be early years practitioners and 3-4 year old children in early years settings in England and Catalonia.

#### Respect for participants' rights and dignity

All participants will be clearly informed about the objectives and methods of the research project both verbally and with a written factsheet in the appropriate language. In the case of the participating children, these factsheets will be supplied to the children's parents. It is important that the children understand that they are participating in an activity that will be used by the researcher in their own work, therefore this will be explained in understandable terms to the children so that they can make their own decisions about participation. It will be clearly stated that participants have the right to withdraw at any time should they wish.

Educational research in the United Kingdom must follow the guidelines laid out by the British Educational Research Association (2011), there is no such equivalent association for Spain, but this study has looked at articles published in Spain discussing ethics in educational research and followed the example of some of these articles by looking at the guidelines of the American Educational Research Association (2011). Beyond national differences, the study will endeavour to be sensitive to the needs of the individuals taking part in the study, taking into account their personal feelings at the time of the research. The data recorded in the course of the study can be made available to participants upon request and requests to partial or total withdrawal from the project will be respected. The final document will ensure that all settings and participants remain anonymous.

#### Privacy and confidentiality

How will confidentiality be assured? Please address all aspects of research including protection of data records, thesis, reports/papers that might arise from the study.

As mentioned above, names of participants and settings will be kept anonymous in the thesis and any other written documents resulting from the study. The raw data will be seen only by myself, the relevant participants and my supervisor though I will keep a personal record of original transcripts, observations and coding systems used.

#### Consent

- will prior informed consent be obtained? Yes
- from participants?      Yes                      from others? Yes
- explain how this will be obtained. If prior informed consent is not to be obtained, give reason:

The study will inform all adult participants and children's guardians about the methods and aims of the project both verbally and through a written factsheet. It

is slightly more problematic obtaining true informed consent from children, but this study will respect children's rights to self-determination by explaining the purpose of the activities in a clear and simple manner so that children are aware that information will be recorded and used for my purposes and are able to choose whether or not they wish to participate.

- will participants be explicitly informed of the student's status?

Yes

### Competence

The methods have all been carefully researched and their suitability to the study has been considered. The methods will be piloted to establish their effectiveness and to highlight any flaws in their execution. As all the research methods will be conducted by me it is hoped that there will be no variance in quality and competence level. I successfully undertook a Masters degree in Educational Research Methods last year, which included the three Advanced Research Methods modules, and I am hoping that will have prepared me sufficiently to conduct this research in a competent manner.

### Protection of participants

The study is committed to the wellbeing of its participants; participants will never be placed in a position of risk and will at all times be treated ethically and respectfully. The study will make clear to participants that should they be under any pressure or discomfort, they are entitled to withdraw immediately. The safety and well-being of the children participating is upheld by the Child Protection experience and CRB check held by me and an insistence that children will never be left unattended by their carers with me.

### Child protection

Will a CRB check be needed?      Yes

### Addressing dilemmas

It is hoped that the fact sheet would explain clearly to the participants the nature of the study, but I am aware that sometimes participants can misunderstand the process or aims. For example, should a participant become concerned that the research is intended in some way to judge their practice, I would try to reassure them, but if I felt that they did not trust the study, would suggest that they withdrew and destroy the data referring to them.

As referred to previously, it is not easy to obtain truly informed consent from a child, but I hope that I have enough experience with children to be able to explain the concept of recording information to use for a piece of work to them. I am aware that children may be more likely to change their mind about participating, sometimes in the middle of an activity, but I will endeavour to take a relaxed approach to this and simply collect the data I am able to.

### Misuse of research

How will you seek to ensure that the research and the evidence resulting from it are not misused?

I will be very clear about the parameters of the research project so that it cannot be assumed to have wider implications than is actually the case. I will also make raw data (transcripts, questionnaires etc) available (though anonymised) in order to provide greater transparency to the project.

### Support for research participants

The study would ensure that any sensitive issues raised by a participant would be kept in confidence unless they were a child protection issue in which case the appropriate local procedure would be followed. Should a participant become upset for any reason during the course of the study, they would be reassured as appropriate and offered the chance either to withdraw or to delay participation where possible.

## Integrity

It is the intention of this study not only to comply with ethical guidelines, but also to consider the values of the project at all stages in its evolution. This study agrees with Sikes, Nixon & Carr (2003) that as improving education is the pursuit of social justice, there is a requirement for a moral approach to educational research. The aim of the project is to inform with a view to improving practice, not to judge or to prove a theory so it would be of no benefit to the project to be unfair or dishonest in any way.

What agreement has been made for the attribution of authorship by yourself and your supervisor(s) of any reports or publications?

I will be conducting and writing up the research myself, but any additional reports or publications will be negotiated with my supervisors.

## Other issues?

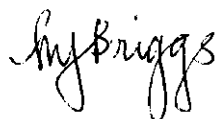
Please specify other issues not discussed above, if any, and how you will address them.

Signed

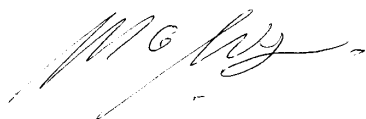
Research student

Date

Supervisors



Date



## Appendix B.

### Lloc A

Situated in a small coastal town (pop. 25,568) in Maresme, Catalonia. The economy was traditionally based around the production of linen and needlework, fishing, agriculture and viniculture. This last sector disappearing as a result of the phylloxera disaster <sup>4</sup>. Since the opening up of Spain in the sixties and the subsequent death of General Franco, tourism boomed, filling the town with hotels and apartment complexes. At the same time, a huge influx of immigration began, continuing steadily until the crash, of people from southern Spain and later North Africa and South America, seeking employment in this industry. As a result, the setting has a high proportion of children for whom Catalan is a second or even third language, though the nature of employment in the local area and a fairly flat social structure means that economic differences between the families are not too marked.

The setting is a nursery class in one of eight primary schools serving the town and its suburbs. The School is a large, purpose-built two-storey building surrounded by sanded playgrounds. The class is under capacity with 21 children and the teacher is always assisted by a regular assistant, who is usually covered by another if she has other duties. The school tries to ensure that this class remains under capacity, but acknowledges that this may not always be possible. The classroom is bright and well-decorated with displays, though little of it seems to be the children's work. The classroom is focused towards a large blackboard which is decorated with pictures, letters and parts of a story. The teacher's desk and PC are to the left of this. The centre of the room is occupied with clusters of tables, each place labelled with a child's name, which is where they will spend most of their time. Around the edges of the room are a wide selection of books, art/craft materials, construction, wheeled toys and puzzles, all at a height where children may access them. There is a matted area where circle-time is carried out that is equipped with a board onto which a selection of dates, days and children's names may be placed. Children have a labelled drawer each for their work, a peg just outside the room and a display table that is dedicated to the 'protagonist' of the week: each week the class celebrates one child and their life, their parents come in and talk to the class, the child brings in a selection of photographs and their favourite things and they are given the opportunity to be

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<sup>4</sup>the rapid spread of a vine pest that wiped out over two-thirds of European vineyards at the end of the nineteenth century

the class helper.

The room is equipped with its own bathroom and a large, low sink suitable for hand-washing and cleaning up of messy activities. Across the hallway from the classroom is a large space which is devoted to 'racons', it is given over to role-play toys: shops, home-corner, a vets and some cardboard houses the class had made when they were looking at the Three Little Pigs. Access to this area is timetabled in one afternoon a week, though it may be used as part of other sessions. Outside is a fenced-in area with slides, climbing frames and a sandpit, though in fact the entire surface is coarse sand. There are two citrus trees and one rosemary bush; next to the entrance is a storage box containing some digging equipment and small trucks. Access to this area is timetabled in twice a day, though the teacher may decide to take the group out at different times. Other areas the children may be taken to are: a specially equipped gym for 'psicomotricidad' for regular, time-tabled sessions, and an allotment at the back of the grounds, though this is infrequent. Children usually attend the morning sessions from 09.30 to 13.30; go home for lunch for an hour and a half, then return for an hour and a half in the afternoons, though one or two children may stay for lunch and a sleep.

## **Lloc B**

Situated in a very small coastal town (pop. 6,100) in Maresme, Catalonia. Like many other towns in the area, the local economy was grounded firmly in agriculture and viniculture, which was ended by the phylloxera disaster, plus some small trade in handicrafts. The town benefitted from developments in transport and utilities across the whole region over the latter part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, allowing it to develop some nascent industry. The town continues to maintain some small-scale manufacturing, commerce and tourism, though the beauty and convenience of the location for the nearby cities have meant that a large proportion of the inhabitants tend to be better-off professionals in city-based occupations. It seems to be particularly popular with some members of the diplomatic community. The town is split in two halves: part on the shore, the other up the mountain, which is where the school is situated. The setting has a few children with Catalan as a second or third language, though they do not come from one particular community. Though the majority of the families that use this setting are placed nearer the top end of the socio-economic spectrum, these families are relatively new arrivals to the area: there remains a small proportion for whom employment, social class, ethnicity and family background can be problematic.

The school is a very large, purpose-built, multi-level building, built into the hill-side. It is one of two primary schools that serve the town. The main entrance is in the top terrace and the nursery class is on the bottom level, reached via long, descending corridors. It has grounds on both the top and the bottom terraces. The nursery class is at full capacity with 25 children attending most days. It is overseen by one teacher, with occasional assistance where there is a spare member of staff. Children are on occasion looked after other members of staff during specialised activities, such as music. The room is well-lit by windows and French-doors that take up one wall of the room. Between the nursery class and the next classroom there is a large bathroom which is accessed by internal doors in both rooms. The classroom is equipped with low clusters of tables with a coloured spot in the middle of each table to help the children identify where they should sit, along with their brightly coloured 'batas'<sup>5</sup> on each chair – they will spend most of their time in these places. There is an area next to the windows where children have their circle-time on the floor and a small area at the back of the room with a few role-play items, mainly home-type toys. The room is set out facing a large blackboard. There is

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<sup>5</sup> A lightweight coat or overall typically worn over the clothes of primary school children and their teachers in Catalan schools.



a list of children's names next to the board and some coloured letters and numbers. There are several units around the room with art and craft resources in them, some at child-friendly heights. The children have labelled drawers in the classroom for their work and pegs outside the room.

The French doors are opened during break times so that the children may go outside to play. They have access to a large L-shaped area, surfaced with coarse sand. Around one side is a large, low wooden climbing frame and an outdoor storage box containing some digging equipment; this side is walled in with gated steps to ascend to the next floor of the school. At the junction of the 'L' are a couple of benches shaded by a cork-oak. Along the other part are the concrete verandas of the three classrooms that share this playground. The other side is fenced and overlooks a lower playground used by older children. Other areas the children may be taken for timetabled events include a room across the hallway for music sessions and a windowless corner of the lower corridor which is reserved for 'racons' – this area is usually fenced off. There is also a large gymnasium and a small allotment which are sometimes visited and all the primary classes in the corridor occasionally visit each others' rooms. The timetable is typical of all primary schools: 09.30 – 13.30 with an hour-long break at mid-morning for snack and playtime. Most children go home for lunch, though there are a significant handful of children who stay for lunch in this nursery class. Class resumes at 15.00 for a further hour and a half in the afternoon. Children spend the majority of their time in the nursery classroom unless they are taken out for a timetabled activity.

## Setting A

Situated in a small, rural market town (pop. 23,576) in the West Midlands, England. The town has traditionally relied on the cultivation and sales of fruit and vegetables, which remain a staple part of its economy to this day. Over half of the population have no qualifications past GCSE level though occupations seem to be fairly evenly spread across the spectrum with unemployment lower than the national average. Though the majority of the population have been born into local families, there is a growing minority from Eastern Europe, especially Poland, many taking on the agricultural labour that would once have been the preserve of itinerant groups or working in the food processing sector. This means that the setting has a significant proportion of children with English as a second language, though steady employment in the catchment area means that the economic gaps between families are not too wide.

The setting is a large, purpose-built nursery school situated on fairly generous grounds within a cluster of educational establishments; a Children's Centre is based in the same building but though they share an entrance hall, they are entirely separate units. The rest of the cluster contains a primary school, a special school and a secondary school. In spite of its location, it is not considered part of the primary school, though it will usually be inspected at the same time. It is one of nine pre-school settings in the town and by far the largest. There are 70 3-4 year olds registered at this nursery school, though not all children attend all sessions, in line with the free provision allowance, meaning that there is perhaps an average of 40 children at any given time. The setting is unusual in respect to other settings in England in that it is a genuine Nursery School e.g. it employs qualified teachers and is administered by the local authority. There are only two such settings in the county. The staff team consists of two full-time teachers (though one, as the head of the setting, is often engaged in administrative duties), one part-time teacher, a team of six teaching assistants and one apprentice. The teaching assistants are mostly part-time and are deployed to meet the ratios of children in each session, morning, lunch-time or afternoon. Owing to the presence of qualified teachers on the team, there is a higher ratio of children to adults than may commonly be found in English settings. There is also a cook and an admin assistant, the cook takes on an active role with the children at lunch-times, allowing other team members to take a break. The setting also offers care to two year olds on several morning sessions. They have their own designated area, but are permitted to circulate around the rest of the nursery.

The building is largely open plan; the only closed-off rooms are the offices, storerooms and staff areas. Even the kitchen allows the children visual access as it is placed in the heart of the building with a low wall and gates around it so that children may watch and smell their food being prepared. The generous areas around this heart are apportioned into areas well-equipped with activities and resources for children to access at will: construction, books, a bank of 4 child-friendly PCs, a range of art and craft activities with materials close to hand, sand, water, a miniature yurt for a quiet area, role-play, snack area, small-world and a recessed 'sensory' area equipped with lights, projectors and interesting objects. The setting is attractive and interesting to look at, not only in terms of layout and resourcing, but in the beautiful displays of large and small-scale art projects that the children have been given the opportunity to create. Apart from set circle-times at the beginning and end of each session and meal-times, the children are encouraged to flow freely around the setting, pursuing their own interests throughout the day. Children have their own drawers and pegs, which they are expected to access themselves.

The setting has an extensive, secure outdoor area, into which the children may also flow. It is divided into several spacious areas: an allotment with fully-resourced areas for role-play and water play, including a rill which crosses the whole garden; an outdoor music area with tree-stump seats and a small stage; an area containing an enormous fort-like climbing frame with a slide made from natural wood alongside a huge sandpit surrounded by tree stumps and cargo netting, this area is resourced with tables, chairs and has a wooden shelter that contains a range of mark-making materials, digging and building materials and open-ended materials such as pine-cones, rocks, shoes and rope; a 'forest' area with a bird-watching hide; and finally, 'the meadow' – a piece of grass-land accessed across a stile with variable terrain, slopes, rocks and wooden constructions. Though the area around the climbing frame has a safety surface, in general the area has been left in its natural, uneven state, with steep slopes and occasional minor risks such as nettles and brambles. This was is deliberate on the part of the school in order to promote children's physical skills and risk-awareness. Going outside, there is a fenced-off, sheltered area where children may find wellingtons and water-proofs to put on. Teachers open the climbing frame area every day for all sessions as it is adjacent to the building and the other areas are opened according to preference and staffing capabilities, though it is usual for the children who stay for lunch to be taken in to the meadow to play whilst the afternoon children are arriving.

## Setting B

Situated in a small market town (pop. 25,505) in the West Midlands, England. The local economy was traditionally based around the processing and sale of agricultural produce, but over the years has become a popular upmarket tourist destination and desirable place to live for many better-off city dwellers. These changes have precipitated a loss of traditional jobs and family businesses in the area. Though employment in services and trades may still be found, the highest proportion of the town's residents work as managers or senior officials. To fill these positions, the town has attracted people from all over the country and abroad, leading to a cosmopolitan, if not hugely diverse, population. The setting consequently has a few children with English as a second language, coming from a range of countries. As the school is located next to a new housing development, the nursery also receives children who live in the social housing that was part of the original permission for the development.

The setting is a preschool that has recently moved from a temporary building in the grounds of a primary school to a brand-new purpose built room attached to the front of the main school building. Although it is adjacent to the school's main reception, it has a separate entrance via its gated play area, reflecting its status: it is not part of the school nor is it run by the local authority, it was originally set up by a group of parents to meet local needs and is now a registered charity. There are 37 children on roll. Children usually attend the 15 subsidised hours and also have the option for paying for further sessions. The morning sessions usually have between 20 and 30 children in attendance, with the afternoon sessions reduced to around 15. The majority of the attendees are between 3 and 4 years of age, with a handful of two year olds in each session. These younger children may have separate group times, but in general the whole nursery is mixed. The manager and deputy hold degrees in early childhood and one is an Early Years Professional, the rest of the team run from unqualified to NVQ Level 3. As a result, staffing ratios are kept to a maximum of eight 3-4 year olds or four 2 year olds per staff member.

The preschool has an internal door to the main school, but this is generally bolted. The nursery is entirely self-contained, consisting of a spacious room, part carpeted, partly floored with lino. It is well-lit with extensive windows along the front of the room and some interesting wooden beams at one end from which is hanging a giant butterfly made by staff and children as part of a long-term project that included caring for caterpillars and watching their transition. At the far end of the room is a separate office area for the manager and the deputy. Two-thirds of the

room in front of this is the carpeted area with a variety of well-resourced areas set out for the children to play with freely: role-play set up like a vet's surgery, construction, a PC, small-world, books, instruments, small items and receptacles for counting and sorting. There is an armchair which is usually used by the practitioners during circle-time type activities, but the children also enjoy sitting in it by themselves or with a practitioner. A line of low units containing a variety of art and craft resources separates this area from the lino area, which has two sets of tables and chairs set out with messier activities such as play-dough or painting. These activities are cleared away at set times so that children may eat snack and lunch together. At the back of this area are a children's bathroom and a separate staff one. To the side is a gated mini-kitchen with a high-wall around it. Between this area and the front door is carpeted again with another low table for activities and a library area with low sofas, chairs and cuddly toys. On either side of the door are rows of pegs for the children's coats.

If there are sufficient numbers and the weather is deemed appropriate, children may flow between the indoor and the outdoor space. The outside area is approximately the same size as the indoor space, mostly surfaced with tarmac and sloping up from the gate towards the door. There is a small, grassed area with a slide, digging area and some flower beds. The rest of the area is partially covered with an extensive shelter and contains a range of outdoor storage cupboards and boxes containing a range of construction, digging and mark-making equipment and physical play toys. This area is set up each morning so that children may enjoy outdoor-appropriate variations of their preferred activities, whether painting, sand or role-play. There are also a range of wheeled toys, but these can only be used if the practitioners take the children into the adjacent school playground.

## **Appendix C.**

### **List of Interviews.**

#### **Catalonia**

Interview with Profesora A - Lloc A (2013)

Interview with Profesora B - Lloc A (2013)

Interview with Profesora A - Lloc B (2013)

Interview with Profesor B - Lloc B (2013)

#### **England**

Interview with Practitioner A - Setting A (2014)

Interview with Practitioner B - Setting A (2014)

Interview with Practitioner A - Setting B (2014)

Interview with Practitioner B - Setting B ( 2014)

### **List of Observations.**

#### **Catalonia**

Observations in Lloc A (2013)

Observations in Lloc B (2013)

#### **England**

Observations in Setting A (2014)

Observations in Setting B (2014)

## **List of Walking Tours.**

### **Catalonia**

#### Lloc A

- Nena O
- Nen P
- Nena Q

#### Lloc B

- Nena R
- Nena S
- Nen T

### **England**

#### Setting A

- Child U
- Child V
- Child W

#### Setting B

- Child X
- Child Y
- Child Z

## **Appendix D.**

### **Interview Schedule – UK 2014**

**How long have you been working in Early Years?**

**Background?**

**What do you consider to be the most important areas to promote in terms of a young child's learning and development? (explore)**

**Personal strengths?**

**How about weaknesses?**

**What does creativity mean to you?**

**What do you think is the role of creativity in your culture and society? (explore) examples**

**To what extent do you think that creative expression influences learning and development? (explore)**

**How does official curriculum guidance affect your approach to fostering creativity in the setting? (explore)**

**Does this guidance harmonise with your own views about creativity? (explore)**

**Is there any other issue you would like to explore?**



## Appendix E.

### Data from the reflective stories (unused)

(translations my own, grammatical construction and spelling original authors').

<p><b>Lloc A</b></p>	<p>"One of my best experiences at work regarding creativity has to be moments and spaces of manual, experimental activities and of the generalization of learning.</p> <p>I remember a mixed-age recycling workshop where children of 3, 4 and 5 years were freely constructing what they wished. The results were great: people, modes of transport, mobile telephones. The creativity and the cooperation between pupils was great, they gave each other ideas and helped each other stick together the elements of their creation.</p> <p>Other situations are moments of playtime, symbolic play and the constructions where they invent real or imaginary situations and live them out with great energy and excitement." <b>(Lead Practitioner/ Qualified Teacher)</b></p> <p>"I think that my most creative moment in my school life was when the class of P4 decorated sweet potatoes in some Autumn workshops.</p> <p>The activity consisted in providing the child with a range of materials to decorate a sweet potato. Some very interesting things came out; the sweet potatoes were people, animals, inventions, objects etc.</p> <p>Every child looked for a similarity between their sweet potato and something in their life, with something that bothered them, something that they liked." <b>(Qualified Teacher)</b></p>
<p><b>Lloc B</b></p>	<p>"As a professional, I think it is very difficult to be creative (at least consciously): we tend to follow patterns or stereotypes.</p> <p>At the level of education for 0-3 years, my experience as a teacher regarding creativity is more positive, I believe it allows the children to be freer and they can better express how they are feeling, there is more capacity to adapt.</p> <p>At a personal level, as I have been doing courses about education, model-making, emotions... I have been appreciating the importance of allowing children to express what they feel; in all senses: at the level of art or craft, emotionally...</p> <p>I believe that I still need to reflect greatly on this subject and that your visit has helped to do so more deeply." <b>(Lead Practitioner/ Qualified Teacher)</b></p>

	<p>"In early years education I have little experience but as a father I have two small children and my experience is as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- It is worth planning and organizing activities of no longer than 10 minutes as past this time children do not pay much attention.</li> <li>- Not all activities have to be manual as preschool children have a particular predilection for listening to stories.</li> <li>- In general, children receive well the same routines, always the same because this is how they construct a model of values and principles. For example story time.</li> <li>- With my students as well as my children I always try to plan or do activities that involve three basic aspects – according to my understanding – of the development of a person of this age:             <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Imagination</li> <li>2. Experimentation</li> <li>3. Musical development."</li> </ol> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>(Qualified Teacher)</b></p> </li></ul>
<b>Setting A</b>	<p>"Little girl across road from my house used her garden swing and skipping rope to rig up a hoist to haul up her younger sister's favourite doll out of reach!" <b>(Qualified Teacher)</b></p>
<b>Setting B</b>	<p>"It is hard to choose the most memorable experience as in my lifetime I have seen many wow moments.</p> <p>In my childhood; being brought up on a farm gave rise to seeing/making and listening to many creative times. But watching the frost on my bedroom window develop stands in line with making my first den in the wood with materials retrieved from the wood. The older I got the more elaborate my den developed by improving and using bigger and different resources – plus tools to assist. Also the necessity for waterproofing, warmth and wind-resistant enhanced this project during some testing times.</p> <p>During my childrens early childhood: Rebecca had friend's round on the second day in our new build house – all were between 3 to 5. Rebecca was showing them her new bedroom while the mums and I went into the kitchen. After 15 minutes I went to ask the very quiet children if they wanted a drink. To find them all in various stages of drawing with waxed crayons on all the walls up and down the staircase. Rebecca informed me that the children liked her new house and drew their families on it so they could stay there.</p> <p>Grace would be exploring all ways to make music with every possible surface and vocally to. At four Grace was role playing her show and used her big sisters felt tip pens to place her make-up on and using a hair brush for the microphone gave a fantastic rendition of Simply the Best by Tina Turner.</p> <p>Learnt experience from mum!!</p>

	<p>At Pre school what has fascinated me is how the children keep up with trend. When I started I was struck by how the boys would construct lego pieces together to make walkie talkies. This year I have noticed the change. Mobilo pieces were being connected together by the girls to make mobile phones and opening them to place to their ear and talk to friends across the room. Last week I saw two girls use stickle bricks with similar connections but were holding out in their hand and the boys had made one to connect inside their trouser belt, then made a bracket for the car.</p> <p>Being given the time, safe environment, space and wide resources to create and express will allow children to develop and extend their thinking skills. With adult support and personal reflection the world is their oyster.” <b>(BA Hons)</b></p> <p>“When my daughter was 2/3 I remember spending hours painting one side of a sheet of paper and folding it in half to make prints.” <b>(Unqualified Assistant)</b></p> <p>“I remember going to an arts and crafts activity day and being given an opportunity to add a drawing to a huge mural, which was the height of the ceiling from the floor and also the length of the room.</p> <p>Before Christmas 2013, along with other children from the preschool, we painted, glued and decorated a huge tree branch with white/blue paint and glitter. We got messy, had to coordinate where we worked, talked to each other about the tree and why we were decorating it. We decorated the tree to use as a display feature for the Christmas Fayre – it looked fantastic and was great fun to do.” <b>(Unqualified Assistant)</b></p>
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## Appendix F

### Wordles - Catalonia



### Wordles - England



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